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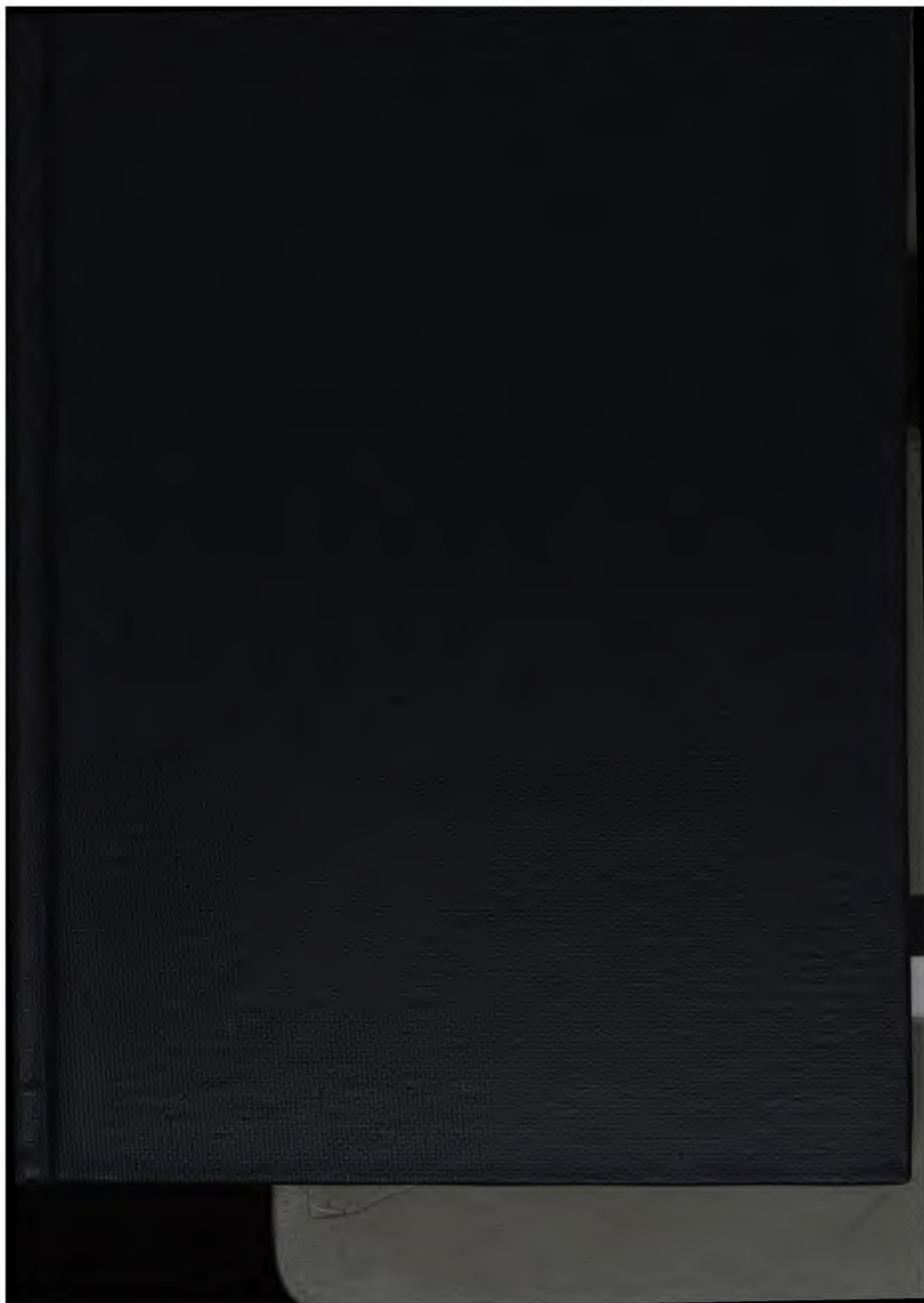
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**THE GIFT OF
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WILLIAM LAMSON

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THIS volume is dedicated by a sorrowing wife to the four churches which her sainted husband served as pastor, the churches that held so large a place in his loving, tender heart.

It is not intended for the world's criticism, but as a precious reminder for the friends who have always proved good and true, with the hope that it may be a blessing and comfort to many, especially to those who have been bereaved. Though his dear lips are forever closed in this world, yet may he still speak through his written words. May these sermons, so priceless to me, have a greater power than ever for good, now the author is enjoying the final blessing which the Lord has to bestow upon those who love Him.

May the richest of Heaven's blessings attend the friends who assisted at the funeral service, and those who have kindly aided me in the work so sacred and dear to my heart.

E. G. LAMSON.

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REMINISCENCES.

By REV. O. S. STEARNS, D. D.

IN a brief sketch of his early years, found among his papers, Dr. Lamson writes: "I was born in Danvers, Mass., Feb. 12, 1812, in that part of the town then called the 'Neck,' now called the 'Port,' in a brick house, built and owned by Israel Endicott, now (1876) owned and occupied by his only surviving child, William Endicott. My father, William Lamson, was born in New Boston, N. H., and came early to Danvers, as an apprentice to Caleb Oakes, an extensive shoe-manufacturer. But after my father had finished his apprenticeship, he became master of a packet, called the Driver, which ran between Salem, Mass., and Baltimore, Md. My mother's name was Sally Richardson, a native of Danversport. I was the second child of these parents. When I was about two years old, my father was lost on one of his return voyages from Baltimore. My mother was left with three little children, in great poverty, for all that my father was worth was lost with him. There were times in the years immediately following, when we knew what absolute want is, when we were scantily clothed and half-fed. When I reached my eleventh year, I felt that I ought not to be a burden to my

overburdened mother. Looking around for employment, I saw but one plan open and that was the position of a laborer in a neighboring brickyard. For two or three successive summers I continued in this work, sustained by the thought that I was thus partially relieving my mother of my support." At the age of thirteen, he became clerk in a grocery-store, in his native place, where he remained until the age of eighteen, when, feeling that he "ought to aspire to something better," and hungering for an education, he gathered up his scanty savings and entered the South Reading Academy (Wakefield), purposing nothing more than the course in the English department. But the fire was in his bones, his zeal for more was stimulated, and by the kind hand of Providence he was enabled to take the classical course, and enter Waterville College with the class of '35. By diligence, earnestness, and devotion he soon assumed a position of high rank in his class, and graduated with such honor that he was at once elected a tutor of mathematics in the same college. As a teacher, he was popular and successful, but his purpose was to enter the Christian ministry. This had been his ruling desire from the time of his conversion, the crisis of his life, which seems to have been passed during his preparation for college. According to the records of the Baptist Church in Danversport, he became a member of that body, August 21, 1831, having been baptized by Rev. James Barnaby. While at home, during one of his vacations, he preached in Gloucester, Mass., three Sundays, and received an unanimous invitation to become the pastor of the young Baptist Church in that place. He yielded to the request so far as to engage to preach to the people

three months, at the close of his year's teaching in college. He finally accepted the pastorate, and was ordained June 7, 1837. November 7, of the same year, he was married to Eliza Wonson Giles, adopted daughter of Captain Samuel and Lydia Greenleaf Giles, of Gloucester: a union fragrant with tender and precious memories to her who survives, and a union full of light, inspiration, and love to the one who has gone before. He soon found that the exacting labors of the pulpit were too severe for his deficiency in theological training, and he became eager for a wider range of knowledge than could be secured from his small library, consisting, as he was wont to say, of his pocket Bible and Winchell's and Watts's Hymns. Accordingly, he resigned the care of the church in July, 1839, and entered the Newton Theological Institution, where he pursued the regular course of studies, two years. In October, 1841, he returned to Gloucester, resuming his pastoral work, and remaining until July, 1848. His subsequent pastorates were in Thomaston, Me., two years; in Portsmouth, N. H., eleven years; and in Brookline, Mass., sixteen years. During a vacation in Gloucester, he was smitten with paralysis, a shock from which he never fully recovered. He felt that his public official labors were ended, and he therefore resigned his pastorate in Brookline, in the autumn of 1875, spending the remainder of his days in the privacy and happiness of his home in Salem and Gloucester, and dying in the latter place, Nov. 29, 1882.

Such is the meagre outline of a man whose life as a student covered a period of seven years, and as a preacher and pastor, nearly thirty-nine years. Who can fill it up? Who can compress into human

language its actual power? None but those who knew him best. None but those who had entered into the holy place of his heart. These, and such as these, classmates gone before, and classmates waiting a little longer, Christians become such through his teachings, and Christians made strong and influential through his care of souls, some of whom have crossed the river, and others of whom are now stepping firmly on the river's brink, all these and many more, engraved the name of William Lamson upon their signet-ring as the seal of "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." "All ye that tarry bemoan him; and all ye that knew his name say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!"

He was a very choice friend to me. When he became pastor of the Baptist Church in Brookline, I first knew him as an acquaintance and then as a friend. That friendship, with more than a twenty years' trial, never suffered a flutter of change. It was a friendship, like his heart, clear and clean as a mountain stream. I know of no word or thought in that friendship he would wish to recall, and I know of no word or thought I should desire to change. We lived as brothers. We loved as brothers.

As I think of him in social life, in his home, among his friends, and as a citizen, he seems to me an ideal of the simple-hearted, tender-hearted, charitable Christian. The winning smile, the cheering voice, the grasping hand made you feel that he was transparent as glass, and solid as marble. His words were the genuine coin of his heart. He would not think harshly of any man; he would not speak harshly

to any man ; he would not speak harshly of any man. There were no crooks nor twists in his speech. Firm in his convictions and honest in his beliefs, he uttered his thoughts fearlessly ; yet so unquestioned did they appear to him as the truth which you yourself would accept, his fearlessness was fearless artlessness, rather than the fearlessness of opposition, or a fearless pride of winning in debate.

This artlessness was in some degree the product of nature, but in a higher degree it was the product of grace. God to him was great, grand, infinite. He himself but a mote in a sunbeam. Christ to him was the "all in all," as the expression of Infinite Love. He himself was the undeserving recipient of that love. Hence his piety was the piety of meekness. It seldom rose to ecstasy. It seldom reached the clear light of perfect assurance. Writing to me, not long since, of some articles in "The Watchman," for which he had received many expressions of gratitude for the strength and hope they had inspired in the faint-hearted and despondent, he says : " Ah ! my brother, they are often written out of a deeper experience than I could express. They are wrung sometimes out of my very heart. Dark and distrustful, filled with nervous fears and forebodings, I turn to the Word for light and comfort, and when I find any there, I hasten to hand it out to others. I wish that when found, it was more abiding with me. It is a great thing to be thoroughly rid of self-righteous dependence. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by faith.' I fear my whole ministry has been defective just here." And in his last letter, some two weeks before his death, he writes, referring to the commotions in the theological world :

“Ah! my brother, what do all these theories and speculations and hypotheses amount to, when a soul is conscious of its near approach to the final decision? My theology is all wrapped up in the simple expression of Paul, ‘This is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.’” The last time he ever used his pen, a few days before his death, he wrote these words in his diary: “Some nights since, I awoke very restless and anxious. As I thus lay, these words were borne in on me with great power and comfort, ‘Be careful’—anxious—‘for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.’ (Philippians iv. 6, 7.) Let me take and cling to these words, as God’s own words to me.” The root of his piety was grace. The life of his piety was grace. The hopes of his piety were grace. The adorning of his piety was the adorning of a meek and quiet spirit. Hence he won friends. In the home circle, and in the social circle, he was beloved, because he was known and felt to be one who sincerely loved. Nothing in himself, all in Christ. Christ expressed His own gentleness and loveliness through him, to the winning of all in whom the life of Christ had been formed. Modest and unobtrusive as the violet of spring, like the unconscious beauty of the violet he was sure to catch the eye of him in whom the beautiful dwelt.

As I think of him in public life, of course I think of him as in the pulpit, and as the shepherd of his

flock. At the beginning of my acquaintance with him, he was in his prime. His views of Christian doctrine were matured ; his methods of preparation for the pulpit were fixed ; and his plans for leadership among his people had a rich background of experience. He had been a child, had spoken as a child, had understood as a child, and thought as a child, feeling his way through the contradictions of creeds and systems of religion, and striving to find that, and abide in that which was substantial and eternal. He had ceased to be an experimentalist or an idealist ; the real to him was real, and the real in church work and his work as a preacher was all he sought.

In his preparations for his sermons he was unique and methodical. He was always in a homiletical mood. Texts were ever crowding upon him, and these texts seemed to open to him as easily and naturally as the bud bursts into the blossom. When I met him on Monday, the themes for the next Sunday were already in his mind, and even the form in which those themes were to shape themselves had been substantially arranged. When I travelled with him, as I often did, plans for sermons were his mental recreation, and his most inspiring conversation. He seemed to live and move in the Scriptures, and the thoughts and words of Scripture were ever trembling on his tongue. He thought in sermons, he thought sermons, and the writing of a sermon, his usual habit, was a mere transcript of the language of his thoughts. The sermon was made before the pen had touched the paper.

Hence the beautiful lucidity of his preaching. Hence its extraordinary accuracy, chasteness, and

completeness. The child could follow with ease every sentence, and the man carried away with him, not merely the text or an impression, but the thoughts in their consecutive order and their main purpose. I do not believe that Dr. Lamson ever preached a sermon which was not readily comprehended by any one of ordinary intelligence. And I believe few men ever preached so many sermons, so full of good matter, which were remembered for so long a time as healthful, helpful, and stimulating. Perhaps *helpful* is the choicest word by which to designate them. Rich in their spiritual tone, peculiarly rich in following through the windings of Christian experience, always elevated in thought, yet seldom or never seeking to be profound, they moved on a plane with the best thinking of his hearers, satisfying the doubts of the doubter by their candor, and inspiring the believer by their harmony with the word of God, and the experience of those holy men of God who in times past walked with God.

As to substance, this experimental cast was the marked characteristic of his preaching. He revelled in the biography of the good men of the Bible. He read more congenially and sympathetically Christian biographies than any other class of books. He read somewhat in other lines of study. He was familiar with the current topics of thought. He kept himself abreast of the times in which he was living. He knew the errors afloat in the political and religious world. He armed himself to meet the attacks of skepticism, and to guide his people through the antagonisms of public morals. He was firm and strong in his utterances for moral reforms, and for benevolent enterprises: but to trace the struggles of the

soul as it sought a pathway to God and to heaven, to save the soul from a morbid introspection with the loss of an energetic life, to help a soul when trembling before the exactions of the Cross, and to urge on a soul to Christ and into Christ, that Christ might be formed within it the "hope of glory," kept him charged with a spiritual life with which to electrify another life, and to enable him to present that life at last, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Hence with him there were no tricks of oratory, no episodes, no surprises, no climacteric flights. Like himself, and like his Master, he spoke right on, as a plain man to plain men, asking not theirs but them, chiefly eager, as a workman not ashamed, to build souls into the temple of God. No fitter evidence of this main purpose of his ministerial life can be given than the scene in the prayer-meeting, the Friday evening before his decease. Says his pastor, Rev. Dr. Morris: "The subject was the parable of the prodigal son. He rose as was his wont—always to give his testimony when able—and dwelt upon these words, 'I will arise and go to my father,' urging every unconverted person present to make these words his own. He spoke with such earnestness, he became exhausted and was compelled to sit down. Some remarks were then made by others, after which he stood up once more and plead with men to be reconciled with God. 'Oh! that every one of you would say, "I will arise and go to my Father!"' This was his last sermon. He was true to himself, true to the mission of his Master to the last." He was wise to win souls.

But what shall I say of him as a pastor! With a nature sympathetic, sensitive, and by divine grace

spiritual, he could not do otherwise than go about doing good. But there was method in this sphere of life as in the preparation of sermons. The training of a teacher had made him methodical, but the training of a pastor made his method atmospheric. Visitation did not assume formality nor did it expend itself in gossip. He knew his people, he loved his people, and he was content to dwell among his own people. Regularly at the appointed day he was at the appointed house, and in that house he was as much at home as in the privacy of his study. Not visiting so frequently as some pastors, he gave his kind word and good counsel to each family, and so far as possible, to each one of the family, stately and cheerfully. He entered into their trials, and sought relief for the poor and the perplexed. He planned carefully and skilfully for the church as a body, sought out, led on, and helped on the young man starting into life, and the old man tottering upon the brink of the grave. He enlisted his people in the development of every philanthropic and Christian cause. Work at home was cared for and work abroad was provided for. The child revered him as a father, and the man confided in him as a brother. At the wedding festival and at funeral obsequies, he ever had the word in season. His mission was to feed the flock of God ; and we'l did he adapt the food to the needs of the flock. Dr. Lamson will be tenderly remembered for his friendship, and be fondly recalled for his helpful sermons ; but for his pastoral watch-care many are those, I believe, who have already blessed him, for his cure of souls, and many more are hastening to remind him of his loving watchfulness.

He was a man of God, and God has already honored
him with that highest of eulogies, "WELL DONE!"

"Thou art gone to the grave! but we will not deplore thee,
Since God was thy ransom, thy guardian, thy guide:
He gave thee, He took thee, and He will restore thee;
And death has no sting, for the Saviour hath died."

THE FUNERAL.

THE services at the funeral were as follows :—

AT HIS HOME.

Reading of the Scriptures and prayer by Rev. Dr. Morris.

The following hymn, which had been exceedingly comforting to him during the last days of his life, was sung by Mrs. Putney :—

“ Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o’ershadowed,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark ! ’t is the voice of angels,
Borne in a song to me,
Over the fields of glory,
Over the jasper sea.

“ Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world’s temptations,
Sin cannot harm me there.
Free from the blight of sorrow,
Free from my doubts and fears ;
Only a few more trials,
Only a few more tears.

“Jesus, my heart’s dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me ;
Firm on the Rock of Ages,
Ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience,
Wait till the night is o’er ;
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the golden shore.”

AT THE CHURCH.

Chant, “I heard a voice from heaven.”
Reading of the Scriptures, by Rev. Dr. Brackett.
Prayer, by Rev. Dr. Hovey.
Hymn, “My faith looks up to Thee.”
Remarks, by Rev. Dr. Stearns, Professor J. M.
English, and Rev. Dr. Morris.
Benediction, by Rev. Dr. Morris.
Bearers : Deacons George Garland, John Pew,
A. E. Price, and Daniel Allen, Jr.



SERMONS.

PROFESSIONAL POWER.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE ALUMNI OF
THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION, NEWTON,
MASS., JUNE 26, 1866.¹

EARLY on the morning of the 13th of July, 1859, there passed away from among the living a man who had for more than thirty years pursued, in this Commonwealth, a professional career of almost unexampled brilliancy and success. He was on his way to Europe to recover his worn-out energies, when, too feeble to proceed, he lingered for a day or two at Halifax, till the summons reached him which all must obey, and which took him that way whence he will not return. His death produced a profound sorrow, not alone in the city of his residence, but throughout the State, and not in this State only, but throughout the country, and in other lands. His fame had gone abroad, and the charm of his eloquence had been recognized beyond the land that gave him birth. Of his character as a whole I shall not speak; of its moral, religious, or even intellectual traits I have nothing to say. My purpose is, brethren of the ministry, for a few minutes, to pre-

¹ Published as the leading article of the first number of *The Baptist Quarterly*, January, 1867.

sent Rufus Choate to you as a striking, perhaps the most striking, example known to us of professional success, and to inquire into some of the elements of that power by which this success was achieved ; to ask and answer the question, "What are the lessons profitable to a minister of the gospel to be gleaned by the study of such a professional life?" I know that our profession is peculiar. Divine in its call, divine in its aims, divine in the sources of its efficiency, it stands apart from all others. But it is not unworthy of the divinely called servant of Christ to avail himself of any and every just means of augmenting his power. His work, the greatest and most glorious in which man ever engages, solicits, demands all the resources, natural and acquired, which any man, the most gifted, possesses. And there are elements of power that are common to all the professions — elements essential to him who would successfully plead with men from the pulpit, equally as to him who would plead with men at the bar and in the senate chamber. My theme, then, is *professional power*; and I have chosen the distinguished man named as furnishing an illustration of this.

It must be admitted that nature had been lavish of her gifts, pouring them richly on him to whom I now point you. To a person, in youth, of rare beauty and grace, there were added mental characteristics equally rare. Truly has it been said, "He was, in two words, a unique creation. He was a strange product of New England. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Samuel Dexter, and Jeremiah Mason seem to be the natural products of the soil; but this great man always seemed as one not having an origin here in New England, but as if, by the side of our wooden

buildings, by the side of our time-enduring granite, there had risen, like an exhalation, some Oriental structure, with the domes and glittering minarets of the eastern world. Yet this beautiful fabric, so aerial, was founded on a rock." But after all that was peculiar in his natural gifts is abstracted, the beauty and grace of his person, the fascination of his eye, the rich tones of his voice of which the ear never tired, the imagination so exuberant, the wit so playful and pungent, and all else of merely natural endowment, which went to make him an orator, and in which, of course, he is inimitable, there remains much in which he is imitable. Indeed, rich and varied as were his endowments, his chief admirer, his very Boswell, says, "He was a manufacture, not a creation. We do not consider Mr. Choate a natural or born orator. We consider him the first and foremost of made orators. His mind and his will formed the elements and talents which nature gave him into an orator of the highest mark." If this judgment be true, and we think it is, then is his example all the more fit for our present purpose, as furnishing both stimulus and encouragement to professional endeavor. What a resolute will and painstaking effort have done, may be done again. The power which Mr. Choate brought to the bar and which grew with every year of his brilliant professional career, may be aimed at by him whose place is the pulpit, and whose themes are the messages of God to man. Sure we may be that his course would have raised him to a commanding position, placing him among the foremost of his compeers, had nature been far more frugal than she was in her endowments.

The first element of his professional power which

we notice was a reverence, almost awful, for law, united with an enthusiastic love for the profession of it. Law was, to him, not the mere will of the majority. "It was the absolute justice of the State, enlightened by the perfect reason of the State; enlightened justice assisting the social nature to perfect itself by the social life. It is the master-work of man." Such reverence he ever felt, and such he aimed to impart to his brethren, especially to the younger portion of them, for that to which his life was devoted. In 1845 he addressed the Law School at Cambridge on "The Position and Functions of the American Bar." It was an occasion that aroused him to do his utmost, one in which it was fitting and natural that he should magnify his office. And most heartily did he do it, revealing, in his fondness and reverence for it, one of the chief elements of his supremacy in it. He saw in the one word *law* the expression of the highest wisdom and the accumulated justice of all the past. "In the way," said he, "that it comes down to us, it seems one mighty and continuous stream of experience and wisdom, accumulated, ancestral, widening, deepening, and washing itself clearer as it runs, the grand agent of civilization, the builder of a thousand cities, the guardian angel of a hundred generations, our own hereditary laws. To revere such a system would be natural and professional, if it were no more. But it is reasonable, too. There is a deep presumption in favor of that which has endured so long. All that attracts us to life, all that is charming in the perfected and adorned social nature, we wisely think or we wisely dream, we owe to the all-encircling presence of the law. Not even extravagant do we think it to hold that the divine approval may sanction it, as

not unworthy of the reason which we derive from his own nature." But not merely in the eloquence of public address was this reverence expressed. It came out in private conversations. It was seen in his whole mien and manner in the court-room. The very attitude and tones in which he always addressed the judge exhibited it. It went with him every where, this reverence for law, and was never laid aside in the fiercest contests at the bar, in the heat of the intensest excitements. He gloried in his profession. He had no higher ambition than to be a lawyer, and was ever striving to realize his unreached ideal of this calling.

Now, without discussing the question whether all this reverence was worthily bestowed, whether there was not something of romance in it, decide this as one may, no one can deny that it was in him a most important element of professional power and success. It helped greatly to make him what he was, and to lift him to that almost peerless eminence on which he stood. The details of his profession have their annoyances, were many of them irritating, some of them offensive, bringing him into necessary contact with men and business from which a cultured mind and a sensitive taste would shrink ; but when he looked at his profession he saw it separated from all these, and it rose before him in all its dignity and grandeur. He fondly cherished the memory of the great names that had adorned it. He exulted in its ancestral character. He read with interest the best periods of Roman history, and was so familiar with the law and practice of those times that if it had been possible for Roman society to reappear, it is believed he could have appeared as an advocate before its tribunal. His admiration and fraternal sympathy for Cicero made him impatient of any adverse criticism on him.

Now, brethren, members of a higher and nobler profession, we all need more of this lofty appreciation of our calling and work. The gospel of Christ — have we the reverence for that which is its due, and which is so essential an element of power in the ministry? If the lawyer can kindle, and glow, and wax eloquent as he traces law through all its known course, and comes down the stream of time, counting the monuments of its history, seeing in it the grand agent of civilization, the builder of a thousand cities, the guardian angel of a hundred generations — if law is thus venerable and august in the view of him who practises it, what ought not the gospel of Christ to be in the regards of him who is counted worthy to dispense it! Does law, human law, seem ancestral? Bring it beside the gospel, and it is but of yesterday. That expression with which Mark opens his inspired narrative, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ," carries us back not merely into the far depths of human history, beyond the earliest records of Greece and Rome — but beyond the earliest records of the race, into the mysterious depths of a past eternity. Its earthly history did not begin in the New Testament, with the birth of the promised One, "but in the Old Testament, in the first promise to our fallen parents; in their sacrificial offerings; in the bleeding lambs of Abel's altar; in the simple faith and worship of the patriarchs." And it had still an earlier beginning. It was no afterthought, no wise expedient to meet an unforeseen emergency, but before the morning stars sang the song of creation, in the eternal counsel of the divine will, in the eternal purpose of the God who sent it, it began. "Its sweep bridges over all time, — its two

abutments resting in the two eternities, the one in the original and eternal purpose of God, and the other in the everlasting bliss of heaven!" Ancient! It is natural to reverence that which has this character. Forty centuries, said Napoleon to his army in Egypt, are looking down upon you from yonder pyramids. But what are generations, ages, forty centuries, to the duration of that gospel which is committed to us, and for whose beginning we must go back to the eternal purpose of the uncreated Mind. Have you veneration for antiquity, would you cross oceans to explore the ruins of long buried cities, or to stand in the shadow of the pyramids; then let that gospel which it is your mission to handle and unfold appeal to and excite that veneration. And not for its antiquity alone, but for its character, its fruits, the great agencies it has employed, the ministries of men, and of angels, and of the Son of God, which have been given to it, its grand march down through the ages, its achievements in the past and its more glorious predicted achievements in the future, what it has done, is doing and will do, not for the life that is to come merely, but for the life that now is, the civilizations it has originated and matured, the fountains of misery it has dried up, the sufferings it has removed or mitigated, the sorrows it has relieved, the souls it has lifted up and inspired with immortal hope and aim, for all these let it win and hold your veneration. It cannot be too profound. Do we seek an example? Take Paul. We are familiar with his chosen phrases, the glorious gospel of Christ, — the glorious gospel of the blessed God, — spontaneous, intense expressions of the reverence he habitually felt, notes which float over the scried ranks of the

apostle's argument like the strains of martial music over the ranks of a marching army. The glorious gospel, and not that only, but the glorious gospel of the blessed God. He could not mention it without an adjective to express his veneration for it. His heart broke out and up through the severest processes of the intellect into utterance at the very thought of it. And was this no element of power in Paul's ministry? Given the talents, the faith, the hope which were his, but shorn of this adoring reverence for the gospel, would he have been animated, upborne, and impelled as he was? In the difficult and perilous mission to which he was called he needed just this. The gospel must stand before him in its beauty, and grandeur, and glory, the noblest revelation of God, of his manifold wisdom, not to man only, but to principalities and powers in heavenly places, that into which angels bend to gaze.

But our reverence for the gospel is the measure of our love for our profession, and the source of it, if it be genuine. United to reverence for law, and growing out of it, was, as we have said, an ardent attachment to the profession of it, in the distinguished man whom we have taken as an illustration. This reverence it was that gave dignity and honor to his calling. In its least attractive, nay in its repulsive duties, he was engaged in the ministry of that law of which he never spoke or thought without a feeling of reverence. Brethren, in no human calling is this professional enthusiasm, this high sense of its greatness and dignity, more needed, in none surely is it so just, as in that of the Christian ministry. It has its trials, annoyances, self-denials, sacrifices, sometimes, we think, more numerous and harder to

be borne than those of other callings. But this may be questioned. Years of experience and observation have led me to question it, to doubt if in any of the other professions—that of law, or of medicine, or of business, or even of agriculture—the annoyances, the things which try a man's temper and test his patience, are less numerous or severe than in the ministry. A shady-side narrative could be written by selecting a member of any other profession, truthful, unexaggerated, and yet quite as dark as any which the ministry ever has furnished, or can furnish. Brethren, enough, too much of this in papers, periodicals, books, and conversation have we had already. The trials of the ministry are no strange thing, such as have happened to no other mortals; but if they were, our calling is a strange one—high, peculiar, glorious, a favor bestowed, a grace given. So Paul regarded it, though called to its exercise when unremitted toil was the service, and stripes, and bonds, and imprisonment, and prospective martyrdom the earthly reward,—a grace given—reserved for an elect number of whom he thought it an unspeakable honor to be one. In the grandeur of the calling, in the dignity of the service, in the glory of the results, all the annoyances should sink out of sight utterly. We are not, servants as we are of the Most High God, called by his Spirit, guided and upheld by his Providence, we are not to go round asking men to commiserate us. To be a true minister of Christ anywhere, in the most obscure position, under any circumstances, oppressed by poverty, and chilled by the want of sympathy and worn by toil, yet with the blessed consciousness within of a divine call, is a privilege for which to be

devoutly grateful. It is the profession of all professions. And the man who once in it sees anything higher, nobler, more attractive, anything for which on the whole he would exchange it, had better step out of it. He can be spared. He has mistaken his calling.

But this intense preference, when felt and kept alive and growing, is an element of power. It cannot fail to be. The man is borne to his work, not by a cold conviction of duty — but by an ardent love. It is his chosen employment. He springs to its tasks with a buoyant and jubilant heart. His tastes are met and gratified in it. And does it need to be proved, that whatever the calling this strong preference for it must be an element of power?

Another feature of Mr. Choate's professional life was the entireness with which he gave himself to it. He was emphatically "totus in illis." He not only thought of no other calling as attractive — but he prosecuted this with a rare singleness of aim and concentration of faculties. To be in the true sense a lawyer, the great advocate, filled his ambition. Chosen to the United States Senate, he occupied for four years the chair made vacant by the resignation of his illustrious friend Webster. But at the close of the term he hastened with joy to the practice of a profession of which he was so fond. He was many times offered positions of honor by the State and National Governments, but they would have taken him from his chosen place as an advocate at the bar, and he declined them. He was an active, laborious member of the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention, but during all its sessions he was carrying on more or less law. He occasionally delivered lyceum addresses and academic or other orations, but never to

interrupt or interfere with his professional duties. "Not a single case of law was refused or slighted for them." He went to Europe. The second day in London was wholly spent in hearing causes argued in some of the various courts of that metropolis. In his relaxation, amidst the novelties and excitements of his first tour abroad, his profession was uppermost. He had a taste for literature, cultivated it, kept it ever alive, was full of sympathy with literary men and their works, and especially fond of the classics and imaginative literature. But he read the ancient classics, his favorite English authors, — Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Burke and others, — the current issues of the press, the periodicals and daily papers, as a lawyer, and all that he gathered from them was safely stored in his unfailing memory, ready, when the occasion called, to be brought forth and made available at the bar. And at the summit of his career "his was that glory of which nightly he had dreamed and for which he struggled daily from his first entrance upon active life — the glory of the great advocate — the ruler of the twelve. To gain this particular altitude in history he made all his endowments and all his experiences contribute together."

Now this in the ministry would be just obeying the inspired counsel of Paul to Timothy, *ταῦτα μελέτα, ἐν τοῦτοις ἴσθι* — meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them. The largest gifts and finest powers become weak, when divided and dissipated among many aims ; inferior gifts and acquisitions are mighty when concentrated. He who would rise to eminence and make his enduring mark in the world, must give himself to one aim. And surely, my

brethren, we need to correct our views of the Christian ministry, if that does not present a field broad enough to demand all that we have and are. The day has indeed gone by when the Bible and a copy of Watts's Hymns were a sufficient library for the preacher. He may be a man of letters, intermeddling with all learning, science, history, poetry, philosophy and works of the imagination ; but in all his reading, study, whatever the department, whoever the author, he is to read and study as a minister of the gospel. He goes into these side fields that he may bring back something from them by which he will be better furnished for his great work. The grand aim must be ever before him. He may go abroad, whether his health demands it or not ; but in all that he sees, hears, experiences in other lands, he will be but collecting that which will give him power as a preacher. And is not this an aim high enough, to be a preacher of the gospel, for any man's gifts and capacities, whatever they are ? The divine call to the ministry is one that lays its authority on the whole man, every endowment, every acquisition. It is presumption for any man to think himself equal to this and to something else. One or the other let him be, — a minister of the gospel *or* something else, not a minister of the gospel *and* something else. God has called some of the largest and most richly furnished minds to this work, and when such have given themselves wholly to it, they have found enough to tax and employ all their energies. There has been no necessity of turning aside for either incitement or employment. The most impressive, the grandest passage, we think, in the life of Dr. Chalmers is that which his biographer thus designates — "Dr.

Chalmers presents himself as a repentant culprit at the bar of the General Assembly." The debate was on the question of Pluralities, a most excited one, extending into midnight and then adjourned to the next day. Late in the afternoon of this second day a member rose and quoted from an anonymous pamphlet, published twenty years before, the assertion of the author, based, he said, on his own experience, that, "after the satisfactory discharge of his parish duties, a minister may enjoy five days in the week in uninterrupted leisure for the prosecution of any science in which his tastes may dispose him to engage." As the passage was emphatically read, all eyes turned to Dr. Chalmers, the known author of the anonymous pamphlet — written before that great change which revolutionized at once his views of life and of the ministry. The interposition of another speech gave Dr. Chalmers time for reflection, and at its close he rose amid the breathless silence of the Assembly and said : —

"Sir, that pamphlet I now declare to have been a production of my own, published more than twenty years ago. I now confess myself to have been guilty of a heinous crime, and I now stand a repentant culprit before the bar of this venerable Assembly.

"The circumstances attending the publication of my pamphlet were as follows: As far back as twenty years ago I was ambitious enough to aspire to be the successor of Professor Playfair, in the mathematical chair of the University of Edinburgh. During the discussion which took place relative to the person who might be appointed his successor, there appeared a letter of Professor Playfair to the magistrates of Edinburgh on the subject, in which he

stated it, as his conviction, that no person could be found competent to discharge the duties of the mathematical chair among the clergymen of the Church of Scotland. I was at that time, Sir, more devoted to mathematics than to the literature of my profession, and feeling grieved and indignant at what I conceived an undue reflection on the abilities and education of our clergy, I came forward with that pamphlet, to rescue them from what I deemed an unmerited reproach, by maintaining that a devoted attention to the study of mathematics was not dissonant to the proper habits of a clergyman. Alas ! Sir, so I thought in my ignorance and pride. I have now no reserve in saying that the sentiment was wrong, and that in the utterance of it I penned what was most outrageously wrong. Strangely blinded that I was ! What, Sir, is the object of mathematical science ? Magnitude and the proportions of magnitude. But *then*, Sir, I had forgotten *two magnitudes*. I thought not of the littleness of time ; I recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity."

Ah ! my brethren, it is the true appreciation of these two magnitudes, the littleness of time, the greatness of eternity, that will ever make the true minister of Christ feel that he has neither leisure nor energies to give to anything else. It is this appreciation, inwrought into his soul by a personal experience, that will make him a man of one work and one aim. And the pastorate of Chalmers, previous to his conversion at Kilmany, when he had five days out of every week to devote to science, compared to his pastorate at the same place afterwards, is an illustration of the power of the same man when partially and when wholly given to his work. Solicitations

and flattering inducements are not wanting, were never more numerous than now, to draw the minister of Christ into other engagements and service ; but if, with the cares of a parish and the demands of a pulpit to meet, he cannot find enough to exhaust his energies, he had better lay down his office. He is too great a man for his position. The Master has no need of him. The true reply of the consecrated minister of Christ to all such solicitations, is furnished in the words of Nehemiah to the request of his wily adversaries, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?" *Totus in illis*, wholly given to these things, the man of one work, one aim, such should every minister of Christ be, such must he be if he would attain to true professional power. I have little sympathy with some of the sterner features of the theology of the patriarch of Franklin, as he was called, but I have great admiration for the exclusiveness with which Dr. Emmons, for nearly seventy years, devoted himself to the ministry and to nothing else, and I love the characteristic reply which he gave to his laborer who had the audacity to appear at his study door and request him to help rake the hay which was in danger of being wet by a threatened shower. "Then let it be wet," said Dr. Emmons ; "I am not going to leave my work to do yours" — a reply which only expressed the attitude of his will toward any and every thing that would turn him aside from his one work.

Again, Mr. Choate was an indefatigable worker. He believed in work — he bent himself to it. Few, among his contemporaries, in any profession, gave

themselves so unremittingly to severe toil, toil ever bearing on his great aim, as did he for thirty-five years. The tasks which he imposed on himself, and the account to which he held himself for their performance, were of the severest kind. Many with his gifts and facilities would have been self-indulgent — at times choosing the easier path. But the inclination to this, if ever felt, was constantly curbed and repressed. He had a reputation to win — and then, the more difficult task, a reputation to sustain. It mattered not whether the cause was great or small, whether he was speaking before the humblest magistrate or the highest tribunal of the land, he summoned every energy, set his whole mental machinery in motion for the task before him. Says Mr. Chandler: "The magnitude of the cause or the character of the tribunal seemed to make no difference. Whenever or wherever he appeared there was sure to be a hard struggle. I have known him to contest a trifling matter before a Master in Chancery for several weeks, when the compensation must have been entirely inadequate. The ablest argument I ever heard him make, and perhaps the ablest it was ever my fortune to hear, was before a single judge at chambers, with no audience, not even the presence of his client. The amount involved was comparatively small, but the question interested his mind. He had given it a most patient, and careful, and thorough investigation, and for many hours he discussed it with all the vigor he could bring to bear, with a rhetorical power truly wonderful, and with an array of all the learning which could by any possibility aid him in his cause." And so was it ever with every cause. Whatever he thought worth doing at all, he thought worth doing with all

his ability — and with a yearly average, for the last eleven years, of seventy engagements in actual trials, one can judge of the perpetual and exhausting labor to which he submitted. Those calm, beautiful exordiums to his arguments, and those impassioned, intense perorations were no extemporaneous effusions, but are believed (for it is a matter of faith) to have been written out in the strange hieroglyphics with which the masses of paper before him were covered when a trial ended. It was not genius, a rare combination of natural gifts alone, that gave him his singular professional power, but work, incessant, patient, exhausting toil — it was an achievement, not an endowment.

But enough and more for the illustration of this point. We have touched here the grand secret of all professional power, in the ministry or elsewhere — it is work. This is needed in the law — certainly no less in the ministry. I would meet the candidate for the sacred office at the very threshold of his preparation with the question: Do you expect, and are you willing to work — to enter upon a life of unflagging toil? And I would warn him if he shrank from that, though he might drag out life, bearing the name of a minister, and going through the routine of service, he could never hope to reach professional power. I need not stop, in this presence, to avow my belief in the necessity of a supernatural influence, of answer to prayer, to make the human agency effectual. This we are all agreed upon. But neither prayer nor the Holy Spirit are to be so relied on as to warrant and encourage indolence. At the close of a week — in which the servant of Christ has diligently studied — aroused himself to his utmost —

made all and the best preparation possible — at the close of such a week, in the calm, beautiful quiet of Saturday evening, he may bow in his study, and spreading out before God the results of his toil, with confidence ask his blessing on them. “Lord I have done my utmost. There it is — in itself powerless. Now give the efficiency.” But he who can thus bow and plead at the close of a week of indolence — a week whose days and hours have been permitted to slip away unimproved — needs to have his views of the conditions of divine help corrected and his conscience quickened and made sensitive. I believe we are, as a profession, laborious. But I at the same time believe there is no profession in which the temptations to remit exertion, and the facilities for doing it are more strong and numerous. The distribution of our time is much at our own disposal. Some preparation for every Sabbath is to be made — but each man forms his own habits in regard to it — fixes his own standard of what it shall be — determines how many and what hours shall be given to it. Within his study — with the doors closed — there is no monitor over him but his own conscience — and there are no demands but his own sense of duty. He may have an admiring, indulgent people, who are prepared to receive the veriest commonplaces from his lips as the utterance of profound wisdom. Under these circumstances will it require no strong purpose to keep resolutely at work — to bend patiently over the study table, when the sweet breath of June or the glorious hues of October are inviting him abroad — to refuse the concert, the popular lecture, or the social circle when the hours are demanded for the yet unfinished sermon — to close the fifth volume of Froude’s his-

tory, in the very middle of one of its most fascinating chapters, because the self-appointed hour for study has come — to apply the spur when the weary mind, like the jaded body, calls for rest — to repress the feeling that the old sermon, preached three years ago, on a rainy Sabbath to a thin congregation, will do just as well as a new one — to resist the temptation to prefix a new text and a new introduction to a past preparation ; will it require no force of will to refuse all these solicitations, with which we are all, it may be, too well acquainted — whose very countenances and tones, as they look in at the study door, are familiar to us ? It was said by a distinguished teacher in this country, that he believed laziness is the original sin ; and if this be so, as *we* reject Dr Mahan and others on perfectionism, we must expect to struggle on against the remains of this original sin while we live. It has been said that while the best years of the lawyer, the statesman, and the physician, are between the ages of fifty and sixty-five, the best years of the clergyman are between forty and fifty. Whether the remark be true I will not decide. But, if it be so, certain I am that the best way to meet and remove this comparison so unfavorable to us is diligent and persistent toil — especially in the study. With physical health unimpaired, the fifteen years next after fifty ought to be the most efficient in a man's professional life — may be, will be, if he carries habits of laborious study previously formed into them and through them — if instead of quietly reclining beneath the shade-tree of the position already attained, he sees other heights yet to be reached, and girds himself for the task. Robert Hall was in his sixty-second year when he returned

to Bristol, the scene of his first continuous labors, and destined to become the scene of his closing ministry. He carried there the results of years of intense study, the most brilliant reputation in England as a preacher, and a body infirm and tortured by a painful disease ; but he carried with him an unextinguished literary ardor, an unabated love of study. Through life he was tormented with a desire to write better than he could. Hence it is that he wrote so well. To the unreachd aim — the beautiful ideal — towards which he was ever aspiring, we owe those sermons upon which we now gaze as models of pulpit eloquence, as one does upon the statues of the sculptors of antiquity.

This willingness to work will show itself in a studious preparation for the ordinary or minor service, as well as for the great occasions. Whatever is worth doing at all, — the lecture in a school-house or the talk in the conference room, — is worth preparing for, and is a part of that grand work to which the preacher has been called and set apart. "It was," says one, "an evidence of Dr. Chalmers' singular wisdom, that on a certain fast-day, in mid-winter, he walked five miles in a severe snow-storm to meet a little company of the cottagers of Kilmany, one of the humblest of the Scottish villages, and there, as they sat shivering together in the damp dining-room of the manse, preached to them as elaborate and eloquent a sermon as was that day heard by the most brilliant assembly in the kingdom. It was a token of his fitness for the Chair of Philosophy in the College of St. Andrews, that when he was the incumbent of that office he was accustomed to gather into his own dwelling on the Sabbath evenings the poorest of the

neglected children of the neighborhood, and for that *respected* audience prepared himself with his pen as thoughtfully as for his class in the University. A noble specimen was this of a Christian minister. We can conceive it possible that a Christian should stand unmoved in the halls of Abbotsford, or on the banks of the Doon; but we envy not the heart or the intellect of the man who can enter the darkened study of the manse of Morning Side, where the Apollos of the Scottish pulpit breathed out his life at midnight and alone, and there look without emotion on the manuscript piles that have been witness to the respect he felt for the villagers of Kilmany and the pauper children of St. Andrews."

Another element of Mr. Choate's power, and the last I shall name, was his persistent study of human nature, — not in the abstract but in the concrete, — the human nature before him embodied in the twelve men with whom he had then and there to do. They were the material for the time being on which he had to work. Their prejudices were to be removed, their ignorance enlightened, their judgments convinced, and their sympathies won. To do this he must know not men, but these men, their history, characters, modes of thought, likes and dislikes. In a long trial his study of the twelve began the moment he took his seat and looked into their eyes; and long before the evidence was in, from personal observation or inquiry, he had learned the quality of every one of them. "Many and many a time did he direct solid masses of his oratoric artillery upon the heart or head of a peculiar juryman, whose individuality he had learned during the trial." It is said that almost the whole of the closing appeal of one of

Mr. Webster's greatest efforts at the bar was especially intended for one juror of a conscientious character. But the characteristic which was such an element of power in him who had such mastery over juries, and who is deemed so worthy of our study, has perhaps been sufficiently indicated.

We study books, rhetoric, the laws of reasoning, but do we with direct aim, on purpose, study men, the men with whom we have to do, whom it is our work to reach and win? A brother in the ministry, who after a long settlement had removed to another field, said to me: "I find few of my former sermons of which I can avail myself. They were made for that people, for the religious atmosphere of that place, for the idiosyncrasies of the men and women there, and they do not fit here." The brother unconsciously uttered a high commendation of his preaching. The most effective sermons are those which, like the best fitting garments, are made for somebody, for somebody of whom the measure has been carefully taken. There is a directness of aim and an impelling force in such sermons that send their truth right home. Like the minie-ball of the sharpshooter, they are intended to hit somebody and they do. Of course there are personalities which are injudicious, offensive, which no wise preacher will ever carry into the pulpit; personalities which will fix the thoughts and eyes of the entire congregation on a single hearer. You will not understand me to commend these. They have marred the usefulness of many an abler preacher, and they ought to mar it. He has forgotten the dignity and proprieties of the pulpit, is doing in public what he does not dare to do but ought to do in private. But there may be

aims direct and personal which are not offensive: an aim at some plausible objection, at some pernicious habit of thought, at some refuge of lies beneath which a soul has found shelter and gone to sleep, at the sophistry of some skeptical volume which is spreading its poison through the homes, at some masked vice; a great variety of aims which an intelligent study of his flock will be ever suggesting to the earnest and faithful pastor.

The prejudice against a learned or literary ministry, not always unfounded, would find its corrective here. The study of books, however intense, will not injure the preacher if thus conjoined with the study of men; the wider his knowledge of letters and science, the better, if balanced by a commensurate knowledge of human nature. It is this which awakens his sympathy for men and opens the way into their sympathies, converting him from the dried, and emotionless, and statue-like scholar, the reader of elegant religious essays, into the warm, living, breathing pastor and preacher. "There *is* nothing else on earth so great as Human Life, and nothing whose contact so instructs and inspires. It hath mystery in it, the mystery of God's working, the very hiding of his power. It hath forces combined in it, the forces of thinking, of feeling, of deciding, in comparison with which gravitation is coarse and light is tinsel." Now into sympathy with this human life, diversified, mysterious, awful, with those individual forms of it in the very midst of which he moves, and to shape and guide which is his mission, the preacher needs to bring and to keep himself. His power depends on this. He fastens on men's souls, as with hooks of steel, by means of it. He draws them as

does the magnet the particles over which it is moved. We hear of animal magnetism in the pulpit, of a strange fascination darting from the eye of the preacher and fastening on the hearer — and if there be any such thing we do not want it, my brethren. But there is a better magnetism, which comes of the knowledge of men, of the men before us, of their characters and needs, their employments and temptations, their homes and their daily lives, which we may covet and use, which is a legitimate and mighty power in the preacher. Christ, the faultless preacher, had this knowledge in perfection, had it by virtue of his omniscience as we can never have it. He knew what was in man, and more what was in men, individuals. And when he spoke, whether to one or to many, like the skilful player on an instrument, he touched the keys of the soul whom he chose, and brought out the very notes of harmony or of discord which he intended. Something of this power, like it in kind, though infinitely below it in degree, the human preacher is invested with by the knowledge that comes of wisely studying his people. He knows the individuality of his hearers and has to do with it. "His word is to this man and to that man, to you, and to me, and to him ; to each in the singleness of his identity, and in that impressive solitude in which every man is appointed to work out his own salvation."

But already, brethren, I have taxed, if not exhausted your patience. Let us appreciate our high calling, give ourselves wholly to it, discipline and use whatever powers God has given us ; bear with patience, nay with cheerfulness, the trials incident to our work, cherish ever a growing gratitude to Christ

Jesus, our Lord, who hath enabled us for that he counted us faithful, putting us into the ministry. Time is short. From this place we go to the festal board, around which we shall listen to the necrology of another year, the harvest work of that reaper who makes every year and all seasons his own. Every moment while we sit here, when we stand there, our hearts are beating funeral marches to the grave. Another twelve months will pass, and another necrology will be read, and if any of our names are to be found in it, God grant that we may be called from fields of patient, cheerful, successful toil, dropping the sickle only at the summons of the Master—Come up higher. The world, the times, call as never before for men, for workers, for power in the pulpit. Human needs cry out for them. The very atmosphere in which we move is pierced with Macedonian cries. Fields more inviting, waving with richer golden harvests than ever in the past gladdened the eyes of the reapers, are all around us. Thank God, fervently, constantly thank God, for the privilege of living and laboring in such a day as this. It is little we can do at the best, but let ours be, as the grave covers us one by one, that highest commendation uttered by the best lips that ever spoke in human speech: "He hath done what he could."

VALIANT FOR THE TRUTH.¹

But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth. — *Jer.* ix. 3.

THE prophet is lamenting in bitter and tearful strains the sins and defections of his people. In the opening of this chapter he breaks forth in the impassioned words "Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them!" The whole heart of the prophet is moved. Words seem inadequate to express the intensity of his emotions. He longs, like one wearied out and exhausted with what his eyes see and his ears hear, for the solitude of some far off wilderness, away from every human habitation, where the sight and sound of wrong might not reach him. There, hidden from the world, buried in seclusion, he would rather live and die. Following these lamentations is an enumeration of the sins which had provoked them, sins on which he was compelled perpetually to look,—adultery, treachery, falsehood, slander, deception,—a dark catalogue. But in the midst of this enumeration, as worthy of a place there, is the

¹ Dedication of Needham Church, June 5, 1872.

negative charge of my text : "But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth." It is said a man may be known by the company he keeps. May we not judge of the divine estimate of any sin by the company to which Inspiration assigns it? And thus judged, what is the estimate of the sin charged upon Israel in my text? It is grouped with adultery, falsehood, deceit, treachery, the lowest and basest crimes. And yet the charge is only negative. They were not accused of opposing the truth, there were many who did that; nor of restricting it, there were many who did that. But they were not valiant for it, this was the accusation. They could see others despise it, deny it, trample it under foot, and do nothing to defend it. They to whom God had especially committed his truth, the nation selected to be its depository, honored to receive it by supernatural communications, they had ceased to be valiant for it, had become indifferent to it. It was a heavy charge. Could not the same charge be made now? Is it not true of many of whom better things ought to be expected? True Christian valor, heroism for God's truth on the earth, is not this a great want of the times?

Permit me to attempt an answer to the question What is it to be valiant for the truth?

I. It implies a hearty *appreciation* of the truth. No man will contend for that on which he places no value, or a slight one. He must see a worth in that for which he is to fight and suffer. The valor of our revolutionary heroes, and of our heroes in the later war of the rebellion, was inspired by an intelligent appreciation of that for which they fought. In the one case it was independence from the bondage of an oppressive and tyrannical government. In the other

case it was for the defence of that independence and liberty thus dearly purchased. In both cases it was a war of principle. The great body of those who went forth to imperil their lives, and to offer them up, if need be, knew why they went. They were contending for that which they appreciated, for that which was dear to their hearts, for that without which life would not be worth having. The man who cared not what was the form of government under which he lived, to whom monarchy and republicanism were equally acceptable, who saw no wrong in slavery, and no difference between loyalty and rebellion, might have been forced into the ranks of the loyal army, but he never could have been a valiant soldier. He wanted the heart.

And so in regard to truth, religious truth, the truth of God, the first necessity is a heartfelt appreciation of it. And this is a prime and indispensable requisite. It is precisely here the difficulty lies. Men are indifferent to the truth. They see no special value in it. They assent to it, it may be, or they deny it. It matters not which. The assent is careless, and the denial careless, and both are therefore worthless. Let a question pertaining to business arise, one which affects their worldly interests, and attention is arrested at once, and arguments are sought and evidences are weighed, and all means are employed to reach the safe conclusion. Here the truth has a value, a value which they can appreciate, a pecuniary value. But do I err when I say that thousands in all our Christian communities live and die in almost total indifference to religious truth? It seems to them shadowy and unsubstantial. They see no real worth in it. If like Pilate they sometimes put the question, What is truth? like him they wait not

for the answer. A doctrine may be true, or it may be false, but whichever it is, is no concern of theirs.

But this indifferentism to the truth, to be expected in the unbelieving world, creeps into the Church of Christ. It is there ; we are all exposed to it. There is fascination in the word liberalism. We shrink from the epithet, bigoted. It is pleasant to be considered and complimented as large-minded, catholic, charitable, progressive. But is it consistent with a genuine appreciation of the truth? Is there such a thing as truth, as God's truth? Then I have no right to be liberal with that, to yield it up, to sacrifice it. It is not mine. It is God's. It is not a trifle. It is of priceless value, more precious than rubies, what God sets an infinite estimate upon, and has been at infinite pains to communicate to the world. The prevailing tendency of the times is to this undervaluing depreciation of the truth of God. The world is coming out, so we are told, from an age of dogmatism, of bondage to creeds, into an age of freedom, and the church of the future, as painted by the prophets of liberalism, is to embrace men of all beliefs, the most contradictory, and of no beliefs, in one harmonious, loving, fellowship. Separating walls are to be broken down and taken away. Distinctive names are to be forgotten. Denominations are to be unknown. The believer in Christ and the rejecter of him, Christian, infidel, and pagan, theist and atheist, are all to be united in one grand church, or at least in one grand fraternity. Yes, my hearers, this time will come when all appreciation and love of the truth has died out in every human heart, but not before. So long as there is one soul on earth that believes in and prizes the truth of God, so long will there be

one soul outside of this predicted fraternity of the future.

But if we would be valiant for the truth, here is the first requisite : a genuine appreciation and love of the truth. Its value must be seen, felt. It must be in our eyes God's choicest gift. It is that for which countless thousands of martyrs have cheerfully laid down their lives. There is not a doctrine of the Bible that has not thus been sealed by the blood of heroic witnesses. Were they wrong? Did they suffer tortures and death, not accepting deliverance, for what was of no value? Have we in this nineteenth century made the grand discovery that truth and error are alike in value, that it matters not what a man believes, or whether he believes anything? Then let us throw away our Bibles, disband our churches, abolish our Sabbaths and Sabbath-schools, destroy our Christian literature, and give ourselves up to be floated whithersoever the current may take us. Then there is nothing in truth worthy the valor of any soul. But, —

II. He that would be valiant for the truth must be willing to *search* for it. All the great Christian doctrines are in the Scriptures — but they are not there as in the creeds and systems of belief drawn up by men — not there arranged and numbered in consecutive order. They are there as the facts of science are in nature, scattered over many pages, and hidden under a variety of forms, but ever ready to reveal themselves to the careful and inquiring reader. But must every Christian go to the original sources, begin *de novo*, spurning all help from past investigations of the pious and learned? Is this what is meant by searching for the truth? No, my

hearers. No such radicalism as this is intended. We may all be greatly helped in our search. Life is too short, and leisure is too scanty, for any man to decline all help from the labors of the great and good who have gone before him, or from the labors of those who are contemporary with him. And yet with God's written Word before us, in our own language, shall we take our creed, as a man takes his garment from the tailor, ready made? Shall we search the Scriptures and prove doctrines, and arrive at conclusions, and settle most momentous questions by proxy? Shall we Protestants permit another man to tell us authoritatively what are, and what are not, the doctrines of revelation? Not so have the heroic believers of the past done. Paul preached at Berea, in the synagogue of the Jews. He asserted to these Bereans, no doubt, that the gospel which he preached was in accordance with their Scriptures, and that the Jesus to whom he pointed them was the predicted Messiah, that in him were fulfilled the ancient prophecies. They were momentous assertions. If true, nothing could exceed them in importance. What did these Bereans do? Reject them? No. Receive them on the testimony of Paul, and indolently assent to them? No. But while they listened earnestly and respectfully to his messages, they searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. And hence inspiration has pronounced them the *noble* Bereans. Thus searching for the truth, when they found it it was theirs, theirs to believe, theirs to rest upon, theirs to proclaim and to defend. They revered the Scriptures. These were to them the ultimate appeal, the supreme authority, the word of God. Paul's words were no doubt persuasive, power-

ful, convincing, they always were, but did they accord with the Scriptures? That was the question, and to answer it they searched the Scriptures daily. Now before we can have a generation of believers valiant for the truth, we must have a generation who search the Scriptures daily; a generation who carry every doctrine and precept to the Bible, and abide by its decision. What saith the Bible? That question answered, it matters little what men may say.

And is there not need of returning to the old paths in this respect? In the multitude of diversions of the times, and the abundance of reading which the press is daily sending forth, the Bible is pushed aside. It is not read, examined, searched as it was by even our fathers. We have helps of which they knew nothing; commentaries, dictionaries, maps, placing before us the localities and the customs of the times when the Scriptures were written, abound. And they are useful. But those great, underlying doctrines of Christianity which constitute the essence and the glory of the gospel, need not these helps to make them plain. They are embodied in texts which are decisive and unchanging. There our fathers found them, and fed on them. There they are now, and may be found by us. Do we believe the truth is of priceless value? Do we believe God has revealed it in these Scriptures? Then let us search for it as for hid treasure. In this way only can we make it our own. In this way only can we grasp it with a grasp so firm as to make us valiant for the truth.

And especially are we, as Baptists, bound thus to search the Scriptures. It is our peculiarity and our

boast that we have cut loose from all ecclesiastical and traditional authority. While others may be asking, What saith the Church? it is ours to ask, What saith Christ and his apostles? While others are inquiring, What are the teachings of the Fathers? it is ours to inquire, What are the teachings of the New Testament? These, and these only, are authoritative to us. We admit no infallibility but that of inspiration; up through all modern speculations and all ancient traditions we go, stopping not till we have reached the pure fountain, the Word of God. Doctrines and practices, sanctioned by the beliefs and usages of centuries, and supported by the learned ingenuity of the present, are cast aside as human inventions, if not taught by Christ and his apostles. This is our denominational theory, our denominational peculiarity. A consistent Baptist is one who thus plants himself squarely, firmly on the Word of God, and who can receive no doctrine and submit to no ordinance for which there is not Scriptural proof or sanction. An ordinance may be beautiful, appealing strongly to our æsthetic taste, touching to our sensibilities; but all that is nothing to the purpose. Did Christ command it? Did the apostles practise it? A doctrine may seem to us right, honorable to God, acceptable to our benevolent sympathies; but all that cannot prove it true. Did Christ teach it? Is it found in the writings of Paul and John and Peter — is it a Bible doctrine? Such, my brethren, being our denominational principle, the principle which we proclaim, and by which we ask to be judged, there is on us a special obligation to search the Scriptures. Consistency demands it of us. They are our only authority. But, —

III. One valiant for the truth, having found it, will boldly *profess* it. May not one be a Christian, and go to heaven, who never professes his Christianity? May he not secretly believe the truth, and trust in Jesus, and worship God? I do not know. I certainly hope so. I hope He who reads all hearts does see in many who are outside of all church relations genuine penitence, and devotion and love and faith. But that it is the duty of all who have found Christ, and trusted in him, to profess him before men is certain. It is a duty commanded by the Scriptures, and evident in the very nature of the case. It was never more perilous to confess Christ, and it never will be more perilous, than it was in the early years of the Christian history. All the reasons that can be conceived as holding one back from such a profession were then operating in full force. Scourging, imprisonments, tortures, death, were the penalties of such a profession. Yet in view of all this the command was laid upon the disciple to publicly profess Christ. It was to men and women thus surrounded by enemies and persecutors of the cause that Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." And it was in the face of the most terrific threatenings, and the most certain and fearful persecutions, that men and women in great numbers professed their faith in Christ, and their belief in the gospel. They had found the truth, they believed the truth, and they could not but profess and proclaim it. When Peter and John, by a notable miracle, had excited the wrath of the rulers, and had been cast into

prison, they were brought forth the next day, and placed in the midst of the great Council. There, as criminals, they were questioned and examined. There, as moral heroes, valiant for the truth, they fearlessly proclaimed the gospel to their rulers and judges. And there, when solemnly commanded not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus, they returned the memorable and heroic answer, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And such was the spirit of all those early Christians, and such the response with which every threatening was met. Secret discipleship! Unavowed faith! Unexpressed love! They knew nothing of any such discipleship, or faith, or love. They could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard and felt. They must proclaim their faith, come what might.

Now, friends, were these early Christians right? Was it a mistaken sense of duty which led them to sacrifice all things and endure all things rather than deny or *conceal* the truth of God? Did they lay down their lives for nothing, when they laid them down for the privilege of confessing Christ? You would hardly say this. You admire their fearlessness and constancy. You see that they were but obeying the command of Christ. Can you then justify yourself, if you hope in Christ, in withholding a public acknowledgment of him? Are there any reasons that can justify one who believes he has found and embraced the truth in not professing it before the world? Truth and error, infidelity and Christianity, are in conflict. The battle is waxing

fiercer every day. With a boldness unknown to our fathers the enemies of the truth are struggling for the victory. Every energy is put forth, and every weapon is employed. And is this a time for one to try the experiment of secret discipleship? Shall he shrink through fear of men, or through shame, or from motives of worldly interest from openly taking his stand with the friends of Christ? In the terrible battles which were fought for our national life, when all the loyalty and patriotism of the land were summoned and were needed, what would have been thought of the man who during all the struggle never avowed his position, nor put forth an exertion, nor made a sacrifice, but who, when the victory came, joined in the shouts that rang through the land, and claimed to have been during all those dark and terrible years a secret friend of the government, in full sympathy with it! A secret friend! And why a *secret* friend? Because to have avowed his friendship would have cost something. My hearers, the day is coming when the war now waged between truth and error will cease, and when truth will be finally and forever victorious, when all its enemies will be vanquished. Would you like to be one then claiming to have been a secret but not an open friend of the truth, one who from selfish and prudential considerations never took a decided stand? Is that the friendship for Christ and his truth with which you hope to go to meet Him and to be owned by Him before his Father and the holy angels? No, no, friends. If it is possible for one to be a secret friend of the gospel in such a world as ours, and in these times, — and I would not say it is not possible, — still such a friend is not valiant for the truth. He wants the essential qualification, Christian boldness. I add, —

IV. That he who is valiant for the truth will defend it, as well as proclaim it and profess it. But would I renew the bitter and heated controversies of the past? Would I like to revive the severities and personal invectives with which theologians of a past century carried on their discussions? If there has been an abatement of sectarian animosity, would I have that bitterness and animosity revived and cherished? By no means. In these were exhibited not fidelity to the truth, but the imperfection and weakness of even good men. Not till love of the truth has become dimmed and marred by human passions will controversialists descend to the use of such weapons. Truth never needs them. The God of truth never welcomes them. The cause of truth is never advanced by them. But we are not left to choose between this kind of controversy, which has been the reproach and stigma of Christianity, and silence. We may contend for the truth in a Christian spirit and with Christian weapons. Jude, writing to believers of his time, says: "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." There have been ages in which men have contended with the sword for what they believed to be the truth, ages in which this was regarded a legitimate warfare, and those who refused to be converted were put to death. Alas, how much blood has been shed, and what untold tortures endured, by the victims of these ruthless persecutions. But I need not say that all such contending for the truth is contrary to the very spirit and teaching of the gospel. Its inspiration is from beneath, not from above. But leaving out, nay, avoid-

ing all violence, whether in speech or by arms, the apostolic injunction still remains: "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." The force of this exhortation is this: There is a faith, or a system of religious truth. It has been communicated to men. Once for all it has been delivered to the saints. And that system of truth, as a whole and in all its parts, it is the duty of believers earnestly to contend for. It is immensely important. It is of priceless value. There is no part of it that can safely be dispensed with. It is not ours to divide the system into parts, and say of these that they are essential, and of those that they are non-essential; of these that they are worthy to be contended for, and of those that they are not worthy. It is *all* God-given. If of sufficient importance to be revealed from heaven, it is sufficiently important to be contended for on earth. Nor is this work to be left to the pulpit, or to the able treatises of Christian scholars. Every believer in the daily intercourse of life, if familiar with his Bible, will find opportunities of speaking a word for the truth. Had we, any of us, any difficulty in pleading our country's cause against its rebel foes during the dark years of our conflict? Did we lack opportunities, or arguments, or words? And while statesmen and scholars were doing much by their speeches and writings to enlighten the ignorant, and confirm the wavering, and inspire the sluggish, it was, after all, the daily talk of the people in their homes, in their offices, and by the way-side, that fanned the fires of patriotism and kept alive the love of the right and the zeal to defend it. All conversation centred

here. The very atmosphere we breathed was laden with patriotic sentiment. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth spoke. Assail the cause in any presence, and the defence came quick and earnest. And this, precisely this, is what is needed of all who are loyal to the truth in the great conflict now waging between that and error. Every one is called on to defend the truth. Does he ask for opportunities? Does he say when, where, how? We answer, just as patriotic men and women defended the truth in the days of our country's peril. They had taken its cause upon their hearts, and then all was easy, spontaneous. Opportunities and places and methods were found everywhere. And when the great cause of Christian truth is thus taken upon the hearts of its professed friends, there will be no lack of opportunity, or place, or method of defending it. There is no one so limited in capacity, or so obscure in position, that he may not bear some part in this gigantic strife. Every one valiant for the truth will find he can do something, and he will do it.

I have thus, friends, endeavored to show what zeal Christian valor for the truth implies. I. A heartfelt appreciation of it, as opposed to indifferentism. II. A willingness to search for it in the Word of God, as opposed to receiving it at second hand. III. A willingness openly to profess it, as opposed to a secret and silent reception of it. IV. A willingness to contend for it, as opposed to a mere profession of it.

If the views presented are true, then the time has not come when the truth no longer needs valiant supporters. We read of the terrible persecutions of the earliest centuries and of later centuries of the Christian era, and we say truly there was need of

valiant disciples then, men of firm faith and fearless courage. And we are right. Such disciples were needed, none but such could endure. But are they not needed now? Because the dungeon, and the scourge, and the flames, and the scaffold, no longer confront the disciple, may he congratulate himself that the warfare is ended? The modes and weapons of the conflict are changed, but the conflict remains. Truth has its enemies, its violent opposers, men who leave no means untried to arrest its progress and break its power. How subtle, and various, and multiplied are the means employed. How much of the conversation and literature of the times is pervaded with skepticism. How much of the science of the day, in all its departments, is aimed against the truth of revelation. How much of the so-called Christian preaching is an attempt to prove that the teachings of Christ and his apostles are not true. Does it require no firmness, no courage, in the midst of the sentiment around us, to hold fast and to defend the truth of God? Has the day when valiant believers are needed passed away? No, friends. The warfare is not over. The battles are not all fought. The victories for truth are not all won. Its friends may not yet leave their posts, and lay down their armor. The soldier's armor and the soldier's spirit are still needed.

But, my hearers, what we all, every one of us, need is, the Truth. It is of unspeakable value. To fail of it, is to fail of the greatest good. Most dangerous, and yet very prevalent, is the feeling that it matters little what one believes, — the creed is of little importance. Is it so? Is it so in the affairs of this life? Men try to believe what they wish to be

true, in religion. Is that safe? A widowed mother had an only son. All her affection and hopes centred on him. A swelling was discovered on the knee of this son. It grew and became daily more painful. An eminent and skilful surgeon was called. At a glance his practised eye saw what it was, and told the mother plainly that the life of her boy could be saved only by amputating the limb. It was terrible to her. She would not believe it. The surgeon was dismissed, and an empiric was called. He assured the anxious and agitated mother that amputation was wholly unnecessary, that by proper treatment both the limb and the life of the boy could be saved. It was most welcome intelligence. Tears gave way to smiles, and the joy and gratitude of the mother were unbounded. Two weeks passed, and that mother, crushed and broken-hearted, was taking her last look of her boy as he lay in his coffin. She rejected the truth, because it was unwelcome. She believed a lie, because she wished it to be true. And now the consequences had come in the terrible blow that made her childless.

One may reject the stern teachings of the Bible, because they are unwelcome, and he does not like to believe them. He may receive error, because it is welcome, it accords with his wishes, it is what he wants to believe. But the time hastens when he too must meet the consequences of rejecting the truth and accepting a lie! Can falsehood save us? The truth, said Jesus, shall make you free. It is the truth that sanctifies, purifies, and saves. It is the truth that meets the soul's needs. The truth is God's remedy for the disease of sin. Substitute error for truth! As well substitute a deadly poison for whole-

some food, and contend that it is all one. As well take the path, in a dark night, that leads to the fatal precipice, instead of the safe path, and contend that it makes no difference.

This building we have now gathered to dedicate to the defence and spread of what we believe to be the truth, God's truth. The idea of erecting this house of worship originated in the minds of those who believed something, who valued what they believed, and who were ready to toil and sacrifice for it. Those who have encouraged them, and aided them by their contributions to erect this sanctuary, have done it because they believed the truth, and the truth was precious to them, and they desired its establishment and spread in this community. It would never have been erected by those who had no belief, and to whom one creed was as valuable as another. Such enterprises and tasks are not born of indifferentism, but they spring from a positive faith.

But what is the truth in the defence and diffusion of which this house has been built? What are the doctrines which are here to be taught? In the first place, all those doctrines which are held in common by the denominations called evangelical. The doctrine of the unity and trinity of the Godhead, of man's fall and consequent depravity, of his exposure to eternal ruin, of atonement by the blood of Christ, of his need of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, — these great doctrines as old as the times of the apostles, and as certain as the Word of God, are here to be enforced and defended. They are dear to the hearts of the men and women who have contributed and labored to rear this structure. They have

been wrought into their personal experience. And sooner may the tornado sweep this house away, or the flames consume it, or the winds of heaven sigh through its neglected and decaying timbers, than it shall be perverted, prostituted to the denial of these apostolical doctrines. They have constituted the faith of the Church, in the centuries that are past, and they will constitute the faith of the Church in the centuries that are to come. We hear much of their belonging to the past, of their having had their day, of their being outlived, of their retaining their place only in the written creeds assented to, but not believed; much of all this we hear. And they do belong to the past. But they belong to the future, too. They are God's revelation. New light is bursting on the world. Science is advancing in many directions and with astonishing rapidity. Great minds are exploring the heavens and penetrating the earth, and bringing to our knowledge secrets, in the presence of which we stand amazed. But the fundamental doctrines of Christianity were true before these modern scientists were born, and they will remain true when the most eminent of them shall be in their graves. They do not depend upon the natural sciences. They came to us by a supernatural revelation. Science, therefore, cannot overthrow them. We dedicate this building, then, to the support and defence of that system of faith called evangelical. From this pulpit the doctrines of that system are to be preached. In the Sunday-School these doctrines are to be taught to the young. In the prayer-meetings they are to be urged on the consciences of men. This building is erected for, and is to be the home of an evangelical church.

But more. This building is erected for a Baptist Church. Rejoicing, my brethren, that there are so many and precious doctrines which we hold in common with all evangelical Christians, that there is such a broad field of Christian truth which we can traverse together, and that we can thus so heartily unite with them in Christian fellowship, there are things in regard to which fidelity to our principles and true Christian valor for the truth compel us to differ from them. If this brings upon us the charge of exclusivism, we submit to it. If we are accused of magnifying trifles, we reply, we know of no trifles that are sanctioned by the example and the command of Christ. One is our Master, even Christ. Believing we have found in the New Testament the pattern of a Christian Church, the conditions of membership, the ordinances, and the officers which belong to such a church, we dare not depart from it. We tremble at the thought of altering or amending this divine pattern. Convince us that the New Testament teaches any other baptism than that of the immersion of the believer in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, or that the precedence in the two ordinances, baptism and the supper, is not divinely appointed, and we will join with all our hearts in breaking down the wall that separates us from our brethren whom we love of other evangelical churches, and will unite with them in church fellowship as heartily as we now do in Christian fellowship. But till we are thus convinced, by a fair and honest interpretation of the Scriptures, this separation must continue. We could not be valiant for the truth and cease to maintain it.

These, then, are the doctrines, to the defence and

promulgation of which we now dedicate this house : First, the doctrines known as evangelical, and which we rejoice to hold in common with our brethren of so many other churches ; and then, the distinctive doctrines and practices which belong to us as Baptists. And may the time never come when those who have erected this beautiful sanctuary, or those who shall succeed them in its occupancy, shall cease to be valiant for the doctrines to the teaching of which it is this day dedicated.

And now one word in conclusion. The Truth of God is of priceless value to every one of us. The divine counsel is : Buy the truth and sell it not. Buy it at any price ; sell it at no price. Next to the positive unbelief, the downright infidelity of the times, is the easy indifference to all doctrinal truth so prevalent in all our communities. On all other subjects truth is valued, and men search for it, weigh evidence, and rest only in what they believe to be the truth. But when the domain of religion is entered, where momentous interests are involved, and where the sublimest doctrines meet us at every step, we are told that men differ, that it was to be expected they would differ, but that these differences were not essential, and one creed may be as valuable and safe as another. But is it so ? Is it reasonable to think it so ? God the Maker of human souls, God who knows all their capacities and needs, has given us in this volume the truth adapted to these souls. Here is just that which meets every man's necessities. It is the truth, not error, that saves. God has rolled on every one of you the tremendous responsibility, with the Bible in your hands, of deciding for yourself what is truth. You cannot rid your-

self of this responsibility. You trifle with it at your peril. You must receive it or reject it. God help us all to discern the truth, to embrace it, to love it, to defend it, to be valiant for it. Fierce and long may be the conflict, but the victory is certain. Mighty are the forces that are marshalled against it, but He that is for it is more than they that be against it. It must prevail. He, therefore, who embraces the truth now, and is valiant for it, however opposed and despised that truth may be, will one day be found on the victorious side.

DEVOUT PIETY ESSENTIAL TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF DIVINE TRUTH.¹

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

PSALMS xxv. 14.

THE phrase, "the fear of the Lord," is often used in the Scriptures to signify godliness or true piety. It is putting one prominent trait, reverential fear, for the whole character. Hence David says, "The fear of the Lord," or piety, "is the beginning of wisdom;" and Solomon, "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom;" and the devout Cornelius is described as "one who feareth God." Hence we may take the expression of the text, "them that fear him," to mean men of true godliness or piety. By "the secret of the Lord" we may understand the mysteries of religion, those pertaining to the being of God, his government, the plan of redemption, and the character and destiny of man; in fine, the whole system of revealed truth. Now my text asserts that these secrets, hidden things, shall be with or revealed to those that fear the Lord. The doctrine of the text then is, that true piety is the most essential qualification for understanding God and his Word.

¹ March, 1862.

We would not deny the utility of learning and study in the interpretation of the Bible. The more of these, if combined with the spiritual requisite, the better. There is a science of theology as well as of astronomy and of geology. And as the facts of these latter sciences are scattered through nature, waiting to reward the diligence of the laborious student who would collect and combine them, so are the facts of theology scattered through the volume of revelation, and need the same labor and research to combine them into one harmonious system. Thanks be to the men of talent and learning who have patiently devoted their lives to this work, and of whose labors we are permitted to avail ourselves. We bless God that he has raised up and endowed such men, men of capacity and culture, for the work. And as in nature, so in revelation, there is yet a wide field to be explored. Much of the sacred volume has, we doubt not, undiscovered meanings yet. Every year is increasing our obligations to learning in the interpretation of the sacred volume.

Another caution. There is a mysticism, which sees hidden meanings and a double sense in almost every passage of Scripture, with which we have no sympathy. It is pernicious and dangerous. The Bible is God's revelation in human language, addressed to the human intellect, and as such subject to the same laws as any other volume. In it God speaks to men, condescending to clothe his high thoughts in human speech, that men may understand and receive them. The mystics tell us there is an external and an internal sense, and that it is only those who see the latter that understand the true import of the sacred volume. This is taking the

volume entirely apart from all other books, subjecting it to new laws, making it a sealed revelation, one that can be understood only by another revelation. We do not find in our text or in similar passages anything to countenance this, nor would we seem to countenance it. That there is much fervent piety in the writings of many of the mystics is not to be questioned, but their piety would have shone more brightly, and been a richer blessing to the world, had it been distinct from their mysticism.

I. But with these cautions let us return to our proposition. Devout piety is most essential to the right understanding of God's truth. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

This is not an isolated passage. There are many others which teach the same doctrine, and we will fortify it by adducing a few of these. Solomon, in nearly the same words, says, "The secret of the Lord is with the righteous." Our Lord says, "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine," making obedience the means of knowledge. And again to his disciples he says, "Unto you," that is you that have believed, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." And Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Without, then, adopting the second sense of the mystics, keeping as wide of that as possible, we may assert, and are warranted in asserting, that a spiritual mind is needed to appreciate and receive spiritual truth. God and his truth are revealed to such a mind more clearly and fully than they can be to another. God manifests himself to him. His secret is with him.

1. There is a natural reason for this. Piety brings the soul into sympathy with God and his word. Sin alienates the soul from God and truth. Let us take the case of a father and two sons. The father is upright, honorable, affectionate, in every sense irreproachable. One of the sons inherits his father's traits. He is like him in the qualities of his mind and the dispositions of his heart. The other son is most unlike him. He is wayward, vicious, in every sense depraved. Can there be a question, which of these sons would best understand his father, appreciate his character, and comprehend his plans of life? There would be a bond of sympathy between the obedient son and the father, and through that bond the secret of the father would be revealed. The sons sustain the same relation to the father, both dwell with him, have the same facts before them, but is he the same man to the one as to the other? Is it the same image of the father which the one and the other carries with him? No, it is not the same. The medium through which he is looked at gives its color to the paternal character, and he dwells in the mind of one an entirely different father from what he is in the mind of the other. And this wholly independent of the treatment which each receives from the father. One has a discernment and appreciation of which the other is incapable.

Now apply this to God. It is all in a vastly higher sense true of Him. There are, we believe, un-fallen, sinless beings in the universe, the angels of God. Suppose one of these, with his character unchanged, to be a dweller on this earth, tabernacling in human form, and looking out upon the earth and heavens, the revelation of God in nature and in

providence, just as we now do. His eyes would behold and his ears hear just what ours do. But would the revelation of God be the same to his sinless soul as to ours? Nay, verily. Each fact would have a new meaning. He would see what we do not see, and hear what we do not hear, and he would have a manifestation of the invisible God which we never had.

But there are no sinless men, men who have kept their first estate. True. But there are men in whom grace has begun the process of recovery, who have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. They are not sinless. They differ from unfallen angels. But they have been made partakers of the divine nature, and have new tastes, desires, perceptions. A work has been begun which is to end in a complete restoration. Hatred has been exchanged for love, and rebellion for submission, and filial reverence for slavish fear. Into their alienated and hostile hearts has been sent forth the spirit of adoption whereby they cry Abba, Father. Can there be any question that to such a soul God is revealed as he is not to others? That with every step of advance in the divine life there will come a new and fuller revelation of Him? And when he talks of God, embodies his conceptions of Him in language, however simple the words, they are unintelligible to the undeveloped mind. He has a spiritual discernment which the other has not, and is like one talking of the beauties of a summer's sunset to the blind. The words are simple, but the ideas are not in the mind, and words cannot convey them. "Talk of God," says a dogmatic writer, "talk of God to a thousand ears, each has its own conception. Each man in this congre-

gation has a God before him at this moment who is, according to his own attainment in goodness, more or less limited and imperfect. The sensual man hears of God and understands one thing. The pure man hears and conceives another thing. Whether you speak in metaphysical or metaphorical language, in the purest words of inspiration or the grossest images of materialism, the conceptions conveyed by the same word are essentially different, according to the soul which receives. So that apostles themselves and prophets speaking to the ear cannot reveal truth to the soul, no, not if God himself were to touch their lips with fire. A verbal revelation is only a revelation to the ear." The secret of the Lord, the secret of God's character, is with them that fear him. To such He is manifested, revealed, in nature, providence, and revelation, as He cannot be to others. And thus there is an ever increasing revelation of God to the growing Christian, because there is an ever increasing capacity to see Him. The secret of the Lord becomes more and more his. With every advance in purity there is an advance in the knowledge of God. Hence Jesus has said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God," a promise which has its fulfilment here, I think, as well as in the vision of heaven. One cannot doubt that the vision of God which the devout and spiritually minded President Edwards attained very far transcended that of ordinary Christians. God was more known, or more of God was known to him. The name had a fuller and more precious significance.

2. But still further, piety subdues the prejudice of the natural heart to God's truth, and thus re-

moves the barrier to a knowledge of it. It was to be expected this prejudice would exist. God is holy, and his revelation is holy, but we are sinful, in us sin reigns. We have all hearts of enmity toward Him, and are prompted therefore to complain of and reject his word. And how mighty has been this prejudice. Infidelity has been a thing of the heart, having its origin there. Men have first wished the Bible false, and then have set themselves to prove it. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God," and then has tried to deny the evidences of his being. And so of the Bible. With hearts bitterly opposed to it, they have tried to find shelter in the dark creed of the infidel. And thus with the doctrines of the Christian system, even when the Bible has been assented to, this innate prejudice has caused its doctrines to be rejected or changed. The prejudice of the Jews blinded them to the beauty of that sinless life which Jesus of Nazareth lived before them. They could not see the dignity and purity and benevolence which shone forth in every discourse, every act, and every miracle of his wonderful life. And they thought Him worthy only of an ignominious death. A like prejudice originates a similar treatment of his doctrines, and leads men, if they cannot explain them away, to reject them. Nothing is more common than to hear one say of some clearly revealed doctrine, "I cannot receive it. I never can believe it. My reason rejects it!" He may honestly believe his reason rejects it, and may think he can show its unreasonableness. But it is not difficult to see the working of a mighty prejudice beneath all his reasoning. It is his heart, more than his judgment, that rebels. And when grace

has subdued and changed the heart, and reason finds no difficulty in admitting the revealed truth, it comes to him in a new light, with a new aspect, under new relations. Many thousands of such cases have occurred, in which, the prejudice being removed from the heart, all the difficulty has vanished, and the rejected doctrine has seemed not only reasonable but glorious. Men have wondered at the change in themselves. A new light has been poured on the sacred page, and familiar but hated passages have become clear and precious.

Take the doctrine of the divine justice, so stern, fearful, severe, threatening awful penalty upon the transgressor, revealing in terrific language the divine indignation. How many have said, "That is an awful doctrine. It makes God a hateful tyrant, a being before whom his creatures must tremble, but whom they can never love." And how many of this very class, with hearts changed, have come to adore the justice no less than the mercy of God, and feel that it is essential to the perfection of his character? The change has been, not in doctrine, but in them. Grace has subdued the prejudice of the heart, and caused them to see a beauty and fitness in every attribute of the divine character. The secret of the Lord has been revealed to them. That which was full of darkness and mystery has become light and clear.

3. Piety, again, brings the soul into the right attitude before God and his word. What is that? An attitude of profound humility. Some one being asked what is the first element in true piety answered, Humility. The second? Humility. The third? Still the answer was, Humility. He would resolve

the whole of piety into this one grace. We would not go so far. It is not warranted. God's word does not say it. But humility is a prominent and essential element in all genuine piety. Certainly, without it, one cannot be pious. The very first step in the work of God on the soul is to prostrate it in self-abasement, and every advance in godliness is a sinking lower in humility. Man by nature is lofty, proud, self-reliant. Man by grace is lowly, humble, self-distrustful. He has had a revelation of himself which forever excludes all boasting. He has seen himself a lost, ruined, justly condemned sinner, and as such casts himself wholly on the mercy of his sovereign. And is there any room for pride, any possibility of it, in such a posture? Now this humility, this condition of profound self-abasement, is just that in which the soul needs to be if it would see God and his truth. There can be no real revelation of either till pride is banished. The lowly heart, the docile spirit, are indispensable. "God hath respect unto the lowly, but the proud He knoweth afar off." Even nature refuses her secrets to the proud inquirer. Men of true science have ever been humble in that respect. They have asked in a lowly spirit. The mighty Newton, great as he is in the world's esteem, was one of the lowliest of men, and died feeling that he had only played with a few of the pebbles on the shore of the boundless ocean of knowledge. But if Nature repels the proud questioner, much more does Revelation. If Nature will not permit a man to bend her laws and change her facts to suit his theory, much less will Revelation. The Bible is given to instruct, not to be judged and modified, and made to say what we think it should

say. The question once examined and settled, that it is God's revelation, the position of every man, the highest as well as the lowest, is at its feet, as a docile learner. And it is not till one is prepared and willing to take his place there, that it will reveal its secrets to him. No learning, no study, no native strength of intellect can put one in possession of the spiritual meaning of the Bible, with pride in his heart. He will stumble at the very threshold of his inquiries, and will go on stumbling as he advances. It is related of Wilberforce, and the eloquent orator Pitt, that they went together to hear an eminent evangelical preacher. The sermon was spiritual, full of the gospel, and Wilberforce listened with rapt interest. His soul drank in the truth, as a thirsty man does water. As they left the church, he asked his friend Pitt how he liked it. "I could not understand the preacher, could you?" was the reply. The eloquent and learned statesman could not understand the gospel message, a message which was all clear and simple, no doubt, to some poor illiterate hearer away in the gallery of the church, whose heart grace had humbled. And thus is it ever. A humble heart more than strength of intellect or great learning fits the soul to comprehend and receive the gospel message. And as humility increases with every advance in piety, so a growing piety is the best qualification for discerning the truth. Such a soul craves it, loves it when discovered, and eagerly appropriates it.

4. But beyond all, and more than all which we have yet stated, God, by special spiritual influence, enlightens and guides the devout inquirer. He seeks wisdom of him who giveth to all men liberally, and he does not seek in vain. He lifts the petition, "Open

Thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," and his eyes are opened. The Holy Spirit, promised by Christ in his farewell discourse, has made his special advent into the world, and abides here, and accompanies the truth. His influences are freely offered to the asking soul. Now He who inspired those who wrote, guiding the pen of each, can enlighten those who read. And He does it in answer to humble prayer. Clouds have been scattered, doubts resolved, and difficulties removed many times to the praying soul. A light has broken in upon the word which could come from no other source. The commentator Scott commenced his ministry, as, it is to be feared, many others have done in the Established Church, a stranger to the grace of God. He selected his profession as a means of a respectable livelihood, and continued it for years, careful only to maintain the outward proprieties of his office. At length by the providence of God his attention was arrested, and by the Spirit of God his heart touched, and he was brought to see himself a ruined and condemned sinner. The change was great, and he found himself not only destitute of the grace of God, but without any established doctrinal belief. Turning now from all human teaching he gave himself at once and earnestly to the study of the Bible. He went over and over the whole book, pausing on each obscure passage till he thought he had discovered its meaning. But his reliance was prayer, the Word of God, and the illuminating Spirit; on these he depended. He took this plain promise, "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall our Father which is in heaven give the Holy

Spirit to them that ask Him," and pleading it continually he pursued his inquiries. The result is embodied in a little work entitled, "The Force of Truth," in which he expresses the confidence that he had been guided into the discovery of all essential truth. He was conscious of desiring to know the truth, he had sincerely sought wisdom of God, and God had freely promised it. "Can any one," he asks, "suppose that after such repeated and continued pleadings of the express promises of the Lord to this effect, in earnest prayer, I should be delivered up to the teaching of the father of lies? Can any one make this conclusion without insinuating that God hath broken his promises, which is shocking to think of?" Now this, I believe was a justifiable confidence. It was not fanatical. It was simply taking God at his word, treating his promise as a reality. And this promise is to us as it was to him. Prayer does bring the enlightening and guiding Spirit who can lead us unerringly into all truth. We do not believe that any soul ever set itself in humble dependence on the Spirit of God, to the study of his word, that was not thus guided. How the Spirit guides, what the mode of its influence, whether mediate or immediate, all that we leave. But of the fact we are as certain as the promise of God and the testimony of Christian experience can make us. By his Spirit, God reveals the secrets of his truth to them that fear him.

II. Having thus unfolded the doctrine of the text, I invite you to seriously weigh a few of the inferences from it.

I. Religious errors are neither innocent nor harmless. It is not uncommon for persons to say, "Who,

amidst the conflicting creeds of Christendom can determine what is truth? Can one be held responsible for his belief in such a condition of things?" If religious error was the result of a want of ability, or learning, or other advantages, then might it be excusable. God will hold no man accountable for what He has not given. But suppose it shall prove, as we assuredly believe it will, that religious error is the fruit of depravity; that men disliked the truth, and therefore could not perceive it; will it then be excusable? If it shall be seen, as we think it will, that God has been ever ready to guide us, following us with the offers of his Spirit, will there be no blame if we believe a lie? Take a confirmed infidel. He may say, "I have examined the subject, studied and weighed all the evidences within my reach, and I cannot receive the Bible as a revelation from heaven. I am compelled therefore to infidelity!" But admit that He who knows what is in man has seen all the while a deep seated aversion to the truth, warping his judgment and blinding his perception at every step; has seen that he first wished the Bible false and then strove to prove it so; will not his infidelity be criminal? And suppose again that, in proud reliance on his own judgment, he has pursued his inquiries, spurning the offered teachings of the Spirit, and has thus, left to himself, reached the dark creed of the infidel, on whom will the guilt rest? The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, but he has chosen to cast off that fear and to restrain prayer, and God has left him to his choice. And the same is true of the essential doctrines of Christianity. It is not immaterial whether we embrace or reject them. God has been at great pains to reveal

them, and offers to guide us in the search for them ; and if we fail of discovering them, with an open Bible before us and an offered Spirit above us, we shall be criminal. There will be no excuse beneath which we can take shelter. God has made it a part of our probation to discover the truth. The great conflict, the grand battle of the world, continued through all its generations, is between truth and error. And no man needs mistake, and take the side of error. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

2. A second inference. We should distrust the conclusions of men of talents and learning, if destitute of piety. It is a sad fact that on the side of infidelity and error have been enlisted much of the talent and culture of the world, and they still are. Now we all reverence these. We look up to them. We are ready to listen to them as those who stand on the mountain tops in a clearer atmosphere, and with a wider circle of vision. It is not strange if the young, especially, should rest in the conclusions to which such men arrive, and reason that, if the Bible were true, or any given doctrine, these men, with their superior minds and learning, would know it. But strong intellects, and fine culture, are no more a security for discovering the truth of God, than is great physical strength. They may be, on the other hand, a direct hindrance, begetting and nourishing the pride which unfits them for discerning and welcoming God's truth. There is an intellectual vision and a spiritual vision, and these are so distinct that while the one is keen and clear the other may be wholly obscured. How many of the young men of this vicinity yielded themselves implicitly to be led by that man of rare gifts and acquirements, who for

years preached the boldest skepticism in a neighboring city, and poured contempt on the most sacred verities of God's word! They saw and admired his towering genius and vast erudition, and felt safe in yielding themselves to be led by him. They did not doubt that he saw farther than other men, and hence discovered the fallacy of the arguments in which they rested. But did his genius and learning make him a safe guide? Did he know God and God's truth through these? Was he one to whom the secret of the Lord is promised, who could see those things which are spiritually discerned? No, my hearers, no. The dairyman's daughter, during the months in which she slowly sank to the grave in her father's humble cottage, with only the Bible and the Spirit as her teachers, knew more of God and of his truth, than that gifted man, with all his learning and research, ever knew; and was more fitted, unlettered as she was, to be the guide of souls searching for the way of life. God in Christ was manifested to her. The great plan of redemption was unfolded to her.

We live in a period when there is much to unsettle our confidence in Christianity and its doctrines. Men write and speak flippantly of evangelical faith as having had its day, as belonging to a darker period, and as about to be succeeded by a nobler theology. Its trammels are broken, and the Christian world is to be emancipated from its terrors and restraints. And these views are often put forth with all the embellishments of genius and learning, and with a confidence that seems to command assent. Men complain of the dogmatism of creeds. But is there not a bolder dogmatism of unbelief? Now I would not

deter any man, young or old, from examining the evidences of Christianity, or of its doctrines. They invite, nay challenge, inquiry. But then I would urge that the investigation be made in the right spirit, with profound humility, and earnest prayer. I have spoken of Scott's "Force of Truth." Let any man read that little book, and I wish every one here might read it — a noble work full of the Spirit and the truth of the gospel — and marking its reverent, earnest, devout spirit, contrast it with the spirit of the ablest skeptical work ever written, and then ask himself to which he would rather yield his soul to be guided ! Which seems to him, in the judgment of candor, to be most likely to contain the truth ?

Again, I assure you genius and learning are no security against religious error. "The most ethereal creations of fantastic fancy were shaped by a mind that could read the life of Christ, and then blaspheme the Adorable. The truest utterances, and some of the deepest ever spoken, revealing the unrest and the agony that lie hid in the heart of man, came from one whose life was, from first to last, selfish. The highest astronomer of this age, before whose clear eye Creation lay revealed in all its perfect order, was one whose spirit refused to recognize the Cause of causes. The mighty light of genius had failed to reach the things which God imparts to a humble spirit."

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. Hear the conclusion of the whole matter. You are on your way to eternity. The journey is a returnless one. You have the Bible, the professed revelation from heaven. You have the offers of the enlightening and guiding Spirit. With that Bible and these

offers God has rolled on you the responsibility of discovering and embracing the truth. With all the difficulties that may beset you, this is your work, and you cannot throw it off. It is of infinite moment to you, as an individual, that you see and embrace the truth. It is truth, and not error, which saves. It is the gospel believed that is the power of God unto salvation. Is it too much to ask that you will study that Bible, and earnestly implore the wisdom which cometh from above? That, in a concern of such moment, you will rest not, till by study and prayer you have determined what is truth? Is there anything unreasonable in one's casting himself, ignorant and weak, before God, with the cry, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law?" Do it, my hearer; do it, as did Scott, earnestly, sincerely, perseveringly, and as truly as God's promises are sure, you shall be guided into the truth. The secret of the Lord, which is with all them that fear Him, shall be yours.

THE MEDITATIVE SPIRIT.¹

While I was musing the fire burned. — PSALMS xxxix. 3.

THE text is but the expression of the working of a natural law. We are so constituted that the heart and the intellect act and react upon each other. The mind does as it were apprehend the subjects of thought, take them into the chambers of meditation, and by retaining them there cause them to act upon the heart. Our intellectual and emotional processes are distinct. Long processes of thought may be carried forward without stirring the emotions, because the subjects may be such as make no appeal to the heart. It is thus often with mathematical and scientific investigations. The intellect may be intensely occupied with these, and for a long time, while the heart is wholly unmoved. But there are other subjects which do appeal directly and strongly to the emotions, and which cannot be retained in the mind without stirring the emotions. The heart must feel, or the subjects must be excluded from the mind. Heat does not proceed from burning fire more surely than emotion proceeds from such reflection. Such was the musing of the Psalmist, and such was the result. While I was musing the fire

¹ January, 1857.

burned. Silent meditation kindled and fed the fire of feeling. The intellect acted upon the heart.

As I have said, this is in accordance with a general and permanent law of our being. A little reflection will furnish us with striking illustrations of this law, with the action of which we are all familiar.

A man has done me a great kindness. In an hour of want and of perplexity and of friendlessness he has come to me with words of counsel and affection, and has opened his hands to supply my needs. I am grateful at the moment, and express my gratitude. It is sincere and fervent. But long afterwards, and when my benefactor is far away, or in the spirit world, the whole scene is brought up before me. I recall my circumstances of distress, and the appearance of the friend in that hour of darkness, his kind countenance and kinder words and generous acts, the delicacy with which he aided me, all these come back with more than the freshness of a present reality, and while I muse the fire burns, the fire of gratitude, and I am melted into tears of grateful love, and reproach myself with coldness heretofore. My heart is hot within me.

Or to take an illustration from another sentiment. A man has done me an unprovoked and intentional wrong. I am indignant when it first comes to my knowledge, and feel that he deserves to suffer, but the thought of the injury takes possession of my soul. I carry it with me wherever I go, retiring with it at night, and arising with it in the morning. All the attendant and aggravating circumstances are reflected on, turned over and over, and the injury becomes constantly magnified, and the heart more and more moved, till the tormenting fires of resentment are

thoroughly kindled within my breast. It is thus that the spirit of revenge is aroused and nourished, by this silent musing on real or supposed wrong, and the only way to allay the feeling is to exclude the thought; the fire can be put out only by withholding the fuel. While I muse the fire burns, and my heart is hot within me.

Or to take yet one more illustration. The husband and father has been long and far away from his home and family. He has not forgotten them; but the cares of business have occupied and engrossed his waking thoughts, and he has only occasionally found time to think of that home circle. But at length, after a long interval, a letter reaches him, with its message of intelligence and love, and it brings back the images of wife and children, and all the scenery of home; and as his thoughts are busy upon them tears of affection reveal how strongly the heart has been moved, how deeply the affections have been stirred. His musing has kindled the fires of emotion, his heart is hot within him.

There is a striking illustration of the working of this law in the change which has been wrought in the character of men who have given themselves up to some work of reform. They are often complained of as men of one idea. And, to a great degree, they are such. Let any sober-minded, judicious, rational man give himself, for instance, to the cause of anti-slavery exclusively. At the outset he utters himself in temperate language. He appeals to reason and Scripture, and labors to convince the judgment and gain the conviction of sober-minded men. He regards the cause as important, but admits that there are other interests of humanity that are important

too. But time passes on, year after year, in which he reads and speaks and writes and thinks almost exclusively on this one topic. And now how altered is his character and tone. Instead of reasoning, he denounces; instead of sober plans and measures, he is prepared for anything. A fire has been kindled in his breast so intense that it cannot be controlled or abated. He can see no real importance in any other cause than his chosen one. Government, commerce, the Church, the Bible — these are as nothing compared with this one cause, and if they stand in the way, or seem to, of its success, they must be sacrificed. Instead of the earnest, but judicious reformer which he was at the commencement of his course he has become the victim of a wild fanaticism. And how has this been done? By the action of that simple law which I am illustrating. One subject for years has occupied his thoughts, and thus been held constantly in contact with his heart, adding fuel to the fire, till the fire of zeal and indignation is fearfully intense.

I have stated the law of our spiritual being which the text suggests, that the thoughts of the mind stir the emotions of the heart, and have given a few familiar illustrations of its workings. There is this mutual action and reaction between the two departments of our spiritual nature — the intellectual and the emotional. We can all of us recall instances in which we have been conscious of its working. And, indeed, there is scarcely an hour of the day in which, if we were watchful of what is going forward within us, we should not detect this law. I take up the daily journal and read of some fearful shipwreck and loss of life. My thoughts dwell upon it. I go in thought

to the rocky coast at the midnight hour, in the midst of the raging storm, and hear amidst the roar of the waves the cries of the drowning seamen. And then I think of the bereaved and sorrow-stricken families, of parents and wives and children from whom the joy and support of life has been taken, of the many homes, the light of which has been put out by that one disaster. And while I thus muse the fire of sympathy for the poor sailor is kindled, and of compassion for anxious or bereaved families. My heart is hot within me. As I muse the fire burns.

Or I sit in the warm, well-lighted, comfortable room, on some cold evening of mid-winter while the storm rages without, and the windows rattle with its blast, and I think there of some wretched and poverty-stricken home where mother and children are shivering over a scanty fire, and of the cause of all this — the intemperance which has brutalized the husband and father — and as my mind dwells upon this suffering, and upon its guilty cause, sympathy and indignation are both kindled; and while I would relieve the suffering, I am still more anxious to punish and prohibit him who, for the paltry profits of the traffic, is pouring this tide of misery into hundreds of homes. My heart is hot within me. While I am musing the fire burns.

But I have already been drawn by these illustrations farther than I intended. I come now to the spiritual use which I intended to make of the subject. The same law holds, of course, in regard to spiritual themes. Religious affections are related to religious thoughts, just as the natural affections are related to the thoughts which cluster around the objects of them. Of course, I am neither denying nor for-

getting the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the heart is changed. I know—for Jesus hath said it—we must be born again, born of the Spirit. But even the Spirit works through and by the truth. The word is the sword which He wields, and by which He penetrates to the inmost souls of men. He works in accordance with the laws of our being, not against them. He leads the sinner to reflection, and thus causes truth to affect the heart, filling it with the deep sorrows of repentance and the exultant joys of pardon. In that mighty transition, the mightiest through which a human soul ever passes, the change from nature to grace, a change never wrought but by the Holy Spirit, and to which the power of no other agent is equal, we have the operation of this law of action between the intellect and the heart, the thoughts and the emotions. The silent musings of the mind kindle the fires of feeling, till the heart becomes hot within the breast of the sinner. Admitting, then, as we do, and to the full, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and of our dependence on Him to regenerate and sanctify, we still see the existence and importance of this law which connects the workings of the mind with those of the heart. The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier. But it is through the truth. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."

The importance of religious meditation—spiritual musing, to use the word of the Psalmist—is our theme. It is a duty to which all the tendencies of the times are opposed. This is an age of action in every department of life. In literature and science, in business and politics, and in religion, all is activity. Whatever there is is outward, visible. If we con-

trast the religion of the present with that of a century since, we shall see this is the point of contrast. Then the Church had not begun to send its missionaries to the heathen, had not even formed the conception of giving the Bible to the world, nor had any of those great benevolent organizations which now employ so much of the talent and wealth of the Church sprung into being. The preaching of that day was more meditative. It went into the souls of men, and started trains of thought which were to do their work in the soul, instead of through it, upon the world without. The religious literature partook of the same character, and hence almost all our books for the closet are reprints of the works of a past age. Among the excellent religious works which are coming in such numbers from the press, there are none that could supply the place of Baxter's "Saint's Rest," or Taylor's "Holy Living and Holy Dying," or the "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis. The religious literature of the present partakes and is adapted to the great characteristic of the present, which is action and not meditation, doing and not thinking.

And surely no lover of Christ and of men will regret the religious activity and enterprise of the present. The great enterprises in which the Church has been going forth for the last fifty years are but a carrying out of the commission of the ascended Redeemer, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." They are right, therefore, and to be rejoiced in. But then this active piety should be combined with the thoughtful piety of a former age. If there is more done out-of-doors, there should be no less done in the closet. If the activity has in-

creased, the meditation should not be diminished. However much any one is doing for the souls of others, or for the world at large, he cannot afford to neglect his own soul. Go abroad as much and as often as he may, there must be times when he returns home and looks within, hours of recollection, or he will suffer loss. While, then, we would not have the enterprise and zeal of the Church lessened, we would have her thoughtfulness increased. There is for every Christian a foreign and a home work. The foreign is all that is without himself, demanding his contributions and active exertions. The home work is within his own soul, demanding reflection, self-examination, and the study of God's Word and prayer. Now, do I err in supposing the tendency is to neglect this home field? Is there not too little of that musing which kindles the fires of devotion in the soul? We read and hear and talk much of religion. I do not say too much. But we think too little. Even our Sabbaths are so occupied and their hours distributed as to leave little opportunity for silent meditation, for personal communion with God and his truth. We have our three services, and many of us four services, and the other necessary duties of the day may easily be permitted to take up the remaining hours, so that even that day, without strenuous care, may pass without bringing with it any opportunity for the great work between the soul and its God.

One of the most common complaints both within the Church and with serious persons without the Church is a want of feeling. "My heart is cold, insensible," it is said. "I believe the truth, or admit, but I do not feel it. My heart is hard. I am amazed

that, believing as I do, I feel so little." Such are the confessions which we have many times heard, and such essentially would be the confessions of many now present, should they honestly express their feelings. Now are we not in this discourse touching the cause, laying open the springs whence flow these complaints? It is not enough that the truth in all its symmetry and beauty be assented to, acknowledged, that the creed be correct, and that we be able to announce and to defend it, — this is not enough. The fire in the heart may burn dimly, and all may be cold there as an unoccupied room in mid winter, if this be all. The possession of fuel well prepared and well housed will not warm the house. It must be placed in the stove and kindled and made to burn, or we cannot be warmed by it. But those great truths and precious doctrines which are to feed the internal fires of the soul, causing the heart to be hot with spiritual fervors, are carefully prepared and stored away, but not used, not appropriated by meditation and prayer. And hence, with all that vast store-house of truth for keeping the heart warm, it is cold and insensible. Oh, should we not blush to confess that, with the New Testament in our hands, containing such a revelation of goodness and love and mercy, the story of Christ's life and death, bringing before us the scenes of the judgment, the glories of heaven, and the terrors of hell, our hearts do not feel, but are cold, having no warmth! And would there be any need for such a confession if the great themes of the New Testament were brought near to the heart by daily meditation and prayer? Would not the fire burn while the soul was thus musing?

It is a mistake to suppose we can have religious emotion only while engaged in public or social worship. The privileges of the sanctuary and of the prayer-meeting are precious, but there may be such a thing as looking to these too exclusively, and depending upon them too entirely for our own spiritual life. The soul that is in a right state, and disciplined to religious thought, will not think lightly of either the prayer-meeting or the sanctuary, but it will often find its best seasons, its richest experience, in the closet alone with God. He who knew our souls and all their wants has said: Enter into thy closet, and shut to the door, and there pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. The history of our prayer-meetings for the year would not be a very cheering one, but the history of our closets, could that be written, would, I fear, be a sadder one. And here is the cause of the coldness and religious apathy which have for so long reigned in many of our hearts and over our community. The gospel has been preached, all the privileges and ordinances of Christianity have been granted. Truth has been gathered and prepared and piled up as so much fuel before the doors of the soul, but it has not been taken in and employed in keeping alive the fires of feeling. If I may carry out the figure, this is the work of the preacher. He spends the week in laboring in those deep mines where God has hidden away his truths. He has wrought diligently in collecting it and preparing it for immediate use. And when the Sabbath returns he comes laden with that which he has gathered, to place it before his hearers, to offer it for their use. But when he has done this, he may have accom-

plished just nothing, because that which he has offered is not appropriated. It is suffered to lie outside of the soul, and is never taken within. And thus it does no more toward warming the soul than the fuel does toward warming the house while it lies in the yard without. How many of my hearers hear the most solemn sermons of the pulpit without carrying away from the house of God a single truth, or ever recurring for a moment afterwards to what has been said. And is it strange that preaching is powerless, and hearts are cold, and the gospel is making little or no progress among us?

My Christian brother, here is the secret of your spiritual coldness. You are neglecting that meditation, that religious thoughtfulness, by which the doctrines of the Bible are brought into contact with the heart. There have been times when you have felt deeply, when your whole soul was moved. You can recall such seasons now. It was thus in the early days of your Christian life, and it has been so in seasons of religious quickening since. Now if you will look back to that period you will remember how your thoughts were continually occupied with religious truth. In the busiest hour of the day some truth of God's word would come into your mind, and dwell there, and stir the depths of feeling in your heart. In the still hours of night truth after truth would seem as it were silently to steal into the soul, and work there till penitence and love and gratitude welled up as from a deep fountain within. Your heart was hot within you. While you were musing the fire burned. But how has it been for a long time past, and how is it now? Has there been any such disposition to dwell upon religious truth? And

is it strange that the heart has been cold, when that which alone could warm it has not been brought into contact with it? Take the admitted truths of revelation home; meditate upon these things; do it deliberately, and see if there be not as a consequence a return of religious sensibility. The regenerated heart must feel when the thoughts are thus employed. It will respond with its deepest emotions to the doctrines of Christianity when they are brought near to it. And the heart thus warmed by the meditations of the closet, glowing with love or melted with penitence, will be prepared for the active duties of religion. Coming forth from such meditation in the closet to the sanctuary and the prayer-meeting, the soul will be fitted both to receive and to communicate good. Our coming together would be like bringing the separated coals of fire on the hearth together, that they might kindle and burn and blaze. Then would our prayers and exhortations be fresh and glowing with the fervors of hearts warmed with love to Christ and to the souls of men. Try it, my brethren, try it. It is the meditation of the closet that prepares us for the duties of the world and the devotions of the sanctuary.

And, my impenitent hearer, have you tried the effect of persistent thoughtfulness? It is often said, "I do not feel, and I cannot feel. I know religion is of all things most important, and wish I did feel an interest in it. But my heart is insensible and I cannot make it feel." True, my hearer, most true. You cannot by a mere volition, an effort of will, cause your heart to feel. There is no such direct and immediate control over the emotions. But what then? We can reach our hearts through our intellects. We

do and can choose our subjects of thought. The man who wishes to become acquainted with any science gives to it his thoughts. Here the will is free to act. And if any man chooses to reflect on the great truths of revelation he can do it. He can think of sin and redemption, of death and judgment, of heaven and hell, holding these tremendous truths, so to speak, in contact with his heart. And if he does this, aside from the mighty force in the truths themselves, he may ask for and expect the energies of the Holy Spirit to make them effectual.

Try it, my hearer. You who complain that you do not and cannot feel, try the effect of deep thoughtfulness, solemn reflection. Give place in your mind to the great themes of religion. Think of the soul and of its destiny. Think of Christ, and his self-sacrificing, boundless love. Think of the brevity of life, of its uncertainty, and of its immeasurable issues. Think, think, my hearer, and invoke a divine influence to guide and sanctify your thoughts, and see if while you muse the fire does not burn, till your heart becomes hot within you.

Shall we say we cannot feel, — we who can feel on every other subject, whose deepest emotions are so readily excited? Are we willing to feel? When some truth has been lodged in our minds and has begun to awaken feeling, have you not tried to get rid of it? Have you not resorted to some amusement, or company, or book, on purpose to get rid of the unwelcome and disturbing truth? Oh, it is not true that we cannot feel! Like all other apologies and excuses, it is without foundation. How could we say to God, "I could not feel," when his truth has been always before us, always knocking for ad-

mission to our thought, but always pushed out or refused admittance ?

The Psalmist says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Thousands of others could give the same testimony. The Word of God, or some earnest appeal of Christian fidelity, or some startling providence, has arrested the thoughts and fixed them on the soul, its relations and interests. Thought has suggested thought. Old and familiar truths have assumed new aspects. What has been dim and shadowy and distant has become distinct and near. And while the mind mused the fire burned. Feeling has succeeded thought, till the heart, alarmed, convinced, melted, has found peace in believing. Cowper has expressed, in language and imagery of surpassing beauty, the condition of the soul stricken by God's truth, and the relief which Christ gives : —

"I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since ; with many an arrow deep infix'd
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by One who had Himself
Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live."

THE INEFFECTABLE RECORD.¹

The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars.—JER. xvii. 1.

BEFORE the invention of paper there were various methods of writing. Among the earliest, no doubt, was that of engraving on the surface of stone, or on metal plates. For this engraving an iron pen, or stylus, was used, and if the material on which the writing was executed was hard, as brass or stone, the iron pen was tipped with diamond. This mode of making records must have been very early adopted, for we find Job exclaiming, "O that my words were now written! . . . That they were graven with an iron pen!" It is to this early method of engraving that my text refers. In the previous chapter the people are represented as asking, under the threatenings of the prophet, "Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?" The charges are then adduced, sins enumerated, sins of their fathers and of themselves, which fully justify the severest threatenings of Jehovah. And in my text they are reminded that

¹ Brookline, October 27, 1861.

all these sins are recorded, written as with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond. The figurative language is an impressive declaration that their sin was ineffaceably recorded, not as though on tables of wax or of lead, but as on brass or stone. It could not be obliterated. Was this true of Judah's sin alone? Was it a special provision of the divine government by which this was done? We infer not. What was true of their sin is true of the sin of every people and of every person. It is ineffaceably recorded. And this is the truth to which I would call your attention. I shall point out a few of the provisions which God has made by which the record of all sin is perpetuated.

I .There are many sins whose record is on man's physical frame. These bodies, in their perfect state, are a wonderful mechanism. But they are subjected to laws which are fixed and whose penalties are certain. No man can, with impunity, trample upon them. And yet, by yielding to appetite and passion, men are by thousands trampling on these laws every day, and every transgression is recorded. Of many vices the beholder may read the record at a glance. On the countenance, in the whole physical frame, engraved as with a pen of iron, may be seen the sins of the libertine and the drunkard. How many does one meet every day in the streets of any large city whose shattered bodies and ruined constitutions proclaim the vices of which they are the wretched victims! And where reformation has followed, and the sins have been abandoned, still does this record remain till the grave covers it. The follies and vices of the young man, engraved on his frame as with the point of a diamond, reappear with awful legibil-

ity in the diseases of old age, and still farther on in the sufferings of a distant generation. None but He to whom the hidden workings of all laws are visible knows how many of the maladies of to-day are the fruit of sins committed generations back and transmitted along the line of posterity. God made the human frame so that it is a tablet on which the transgression of nature's laws might be engraved as with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond. The transgressions are self-registering. Everywhere, in all lands, in all communities, and in every grade of society we read these inscriptions. Look at the intemperate man. His bloated countenance, his enfeebled limbs, his trembling nerves, his inflamed eyes, his whole physical aspect, — what is it but the handwriting by which, day by day, his sin has recorded itself! You may never have seen him before. But you read his character. No man may have ever seen him drink. He may have chosen the darkness of night and the privacy of his own chamber in which to indulge his craving. He may flatter himself it is all a secret. It may be for a while. The first lines of the record are faint. But can it continue a secret? Never, never. It is written in broader and broader lines each day, and must become legible to all who behold him. He must carry the knowledge of it into every circle he enters. No artifice can hide it. God, in the very constitution of his body, has forbidden that such a vice should be concealed. A witness that can neither be silenced nor refuted is uttering his testimony and proclaiming him a drunkard to all with whom he mingles. A secret! If it were inscribed in letters of light on the heavens above him, if it were written on every

object around him, if a thousand voices proclaimed it wherever he went, it could not be more public. The handwriting of a broken law is there, indelibly there, and no human power can erase it. There are other sins which leave equally legible and ineffaceable records on the human frame. We have all seen, read, the records. We say, then, that man's body is one of the tablets on which, as with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond, his sin is written.

II. But if we examine the soul, we shall find still more delicate and wonderful tablets. The same God who framed the body constituted and created the soul, and He made it so that it should keep the record of its own acts, — of all which the compound being, man, does. The memory — how wonderful, how fearful, the human memory! Any man, it seems to me, has reason almost to tremble as he thinks of its power and province. The old man of threescore and ten sits by his fireside at nightfall, and with his eyes closed upon the external world yields himself to the control of this mysterious faculty. In a moment the scenes and events of more than half a century ago come before him as fresh and vivid as though they were of yesterday. He looks into eyes that have long been sealed, and hears voices that have long been hushed by death. He lives over again the days of his childhood, and moves amidst the scenes of that distant past. Memory recalls the paternal dwelling unchanged; the countenances of father and mother, and brothers and sisters; the playmates of his earliest days, the village school, the village green; and for the time he is surrounded by objects and persons upon which for long years he has not

looked, and there is a strange reality about the scene as a whole, and every object of it. And that mysterious, wonder-working faculty which has thus transported the old man over fifty years in time, and it may be thousands of miles in space, we call memory. Well, my hearer, this memory the soul carries with it everywhere. Upon it, as on a tablet of stone, are recorded the words and acts—nay, more, the thoughts and emotions—of every hour, every minute. There is reason to believe that not the most trivial act or fugitive thought or feeling of the longest life fails of its record. There are many facts which strongly indicate this. It would seem that at the moment of death often the whole life is made to stand forth to the soul's inspection, as though the person surveyed at one glance all that he had ever done, or thought, or felt. I have myself conversed with persons who, having been restored when nearly drowned, spoke of this experience, and many such cases are on record. A man had mislaid a business paper of considerable value. Long but fruitless search had been made for it, and the hope of ever finding it was abandoned. Some time after he accidentally came near drowning. All consciousness was gone when he was taken from the water. When restored and able to move, one of his first acts was to go and put his hand on the lost paper. In accounting for what seemed to his friends so strange, he said there was a moment just before consciousness forsook him when his whole life, every trifling and every important act, seemed present to him, and among the rest the laying away the valuable paper referred to. This is not a solitary case. There are many similar facts revealing the probability that the memory at the moment of

the soul's departure acts with unwonted energy, and seeming to show what may be its power after the soul has passed away. In connection with the body it often acts feebly. Under the influence of disease or of age its powers wane and sometimes altogether fail. But this, we believe, is only through sympathy with the body. It is not improbable that every deed and word, and even thought and feeling, of a lifetime may be found hereafter indelibly engraved on this tablet. Many a man has reason to wish for nothing more earnestly than the extinction of this memory. Years ago he committed some foul crime. It was so skilfully devised and perpetrated that he escaped detection, perhaps suspicion. No human being knew it then or knows it now. But he knows it. And though he has lived many years and passed great changes since, and though thousands of miles may separate him from the locality of the deed, still memory keeps the faithful record of it. He cannot obliterate it. Written there as with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond, it remains and must remain wherever he is. Buried in the solitude of uninhabited waste, alone on a desert island in mid-ocean, in some deep and lonely cavern, or in the thronged city, wherever his home is there will memory and her fearful record be. Forget it? Try to wipe it out? As well try to wipe out the stars of night as they look down upon us from the clear blue sky. No power but that which can recreate the soul can erase from the memory the record of crimes. They are written there, and there they must remain. Now, my hearer, your soul has its own tablet, on which an unerring scribe is writing the doings of every day and hour and minute. You may think

that many of the sins and follies of the past are forever forgotten. It is long since you have thought of them. It would seem they were sunken in utter oblivion. Unconscious you are that there is any record of them. But that record lives, and will as surely be revealed to your consciousness as the soul will exist.

III. The conscience is another provision for rendering permanent the record of sin. Memory records all that we do. Deeds which have, and deeds which have not, a moral character are alike registered by her. The memory alone is not a judging, not a condemning or approving, faculty. Dissociated from the other faculties of the soul, it might be as apt and sure to remember a crime as a virtue; an act of cruelty as an act of mercy. But God has placed within every soul a conscience or moral sense to sit there and act as a judge. It goes with the soul everywhere, into all the scenes and through all the changes of life. It discriminates between right and wrong, and is ever uttering its reproofs or its approvals. We all know what its stings are, for we have felt them. Perhaps we all know what its smiles are. Now the conscience acting with the memory does contribute to make the record of each sin ineffaceable. In the first place, conscience aids the memory. By its remonstrances and reproaches it fastens the attention on the evil deed, and thus sinks the lines by which it is engraved on the tablet of the memory. Look at the workings of conscience both before and after the commission of wrong. While the soul is meditating and planning the deed it faithfully warns and remonstrates. It declares the sinfulness of the act. As often as it can gain the ear it

says, "It is wrong ; it is wrong. You ought not to do it." Its whole strength is put forth now to hold us back. As an angel of God, it stands in the path in which the sinner walks to some deed of crime, to turn him from it. But if its voice is unheeded, and the deed is done, then is remonstrance changed to reproof. Then come the condemnations and the scourges of a stern judge. The guilty one cannot hush the voice nor flee from it. In the expressive words of inspiration, "a dreadful sound is in his ears." In the darkness and stillness of midnight, in the solitude of his own chamber, or out in the glare and bustle of noonday, and surrounded by the multitude, does conscience continue to speak. The effect of all this is to make the inscription on memory more and more ineffaceable. There are no deeds so distinctly remembered as those which conscience has severely condemned. In the second place, memory in turn aids conscience. She recalls the sin again and again, that conscience may pronounce judgment upon it. Long after its commission she drags it forth and holds it steadily before the mind, that it may be condemned and the pangs of guilt be felt. And thus does conscience aid memory, and memory aid conscience, till a record is made which no lapse of time can ever wear out. The marble exhumed to-day shows the engraving made thousands of years ago, and men gaze with profound interest on these long-buried inscriptions. But there are human memories, now acting, whose inscriptions are of a far earlier date, and when the most enduring marble has crumbled to dust these memories will be acting still. Wonderful is that mechanism of the soul by which it thus registers its own experiences and

doings, writing them as with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond!

IV. Another tablet is each man's personal character. Character, — what is it? What is your character to-day, my hearer? Not your reputation. That may be true or it may be wholly false. Character is what a man is; reputation, what he seems, what he passes for. What, then, is any man's character to-day? It is the result of all his past action, the fruit which has been slowly maturing through all of life. Years ago, farther back than memory carries you, you began a series of acts to which every day and hour since have added something, and your character at this moment is the result of that long-continued action. Each sinful deed and each unholy thought has entered as a component and permanent part of it. As the stone is hewn from the quarry and placed in the wall of the rising building, and thus becomes a part of it, so each moral act of your life has been placed in the structure of your character and become a part of it. Each one is building up a character. He constructs it; continually he adds to it. Day by day, consciously or unconsciously, we are all toiling at this. It is a work which begins in the nursery and ends only in the grave. Let me illustrate. Far back in childhood one told a deliberate and wilful falsehood. That falsehood has not perished. It entered into the character and is a part of it to-day. It is one item in the material of which that character is formed, having its place and its effect there at this very hour. Again: years ago, in early manhood, one committed a known fraud. It was undetected, is so still. The reputation never suffered. But has it been de-

stroyed? Has it no place anywhere? It lives in the character of the man now. It took its place as a stone in the wall, and still remains there. In boyhood the profane man began to take the name of God in vain. Soon it grew into a confirmed habit, and there are now existing in his character all the oaths he has ever uttered. And thus with all sins. They live, not in the memory alone, but in us, as a part of our nature. Inspiration compares evil habits to the spots of the leopard. "Can the leopard change his spots?" As though each sin had left its own mark on the character as visible and as immovable as the spots which nature has given the leopard, spots which no sun can bleach or floods wash out. Occasionally the world is taken by surprise at some atrocious deed of depravity, some outburst of crime, in one of hitherto unblemished reputation, — a development of depravity which would be looked for only in the worst men. How can it be? Has the man plunged from virtue to the deepest villainy at one leap? By no means. We have not seen the concealed process, the preparatory steps, in this work. But to one of spiritual perception, to the eye that looks beneath the drapery and sees the character, all this is plain. He has seen sin after sin entering into that character, augmenting its evil tendencies, and adding to the forces of its depravity, till now they have burst forth in the commission of a crime which shocks a whole community. The man seems now what he is. The false robe has been torn off. That is an impressive figure which Payson used when he told his hearers that the deeds of the year then closing were the deeds in which they had robed it, and in which it was about to

go up and appear before God. The figure may be extended to the whole life. The deeds of each day are a portion of the robe with which we are dressing ourselves, and in which, when life ends, we shall appear before God. Into this robe of character, woven by himself, man's every act enters as one thread. Oh, if the liar could take out of his character all the falsehoods of his past life, and the profane man all the oaths, and the fraudulent man all the frauds, and the angry man all the hatreds, and the unchaste man all the impurities,— if each could do this! But he cannot. As easily might the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots. As easily might you wash off with a sponge the deeply chiselled inscription from the solid marble. It is there, and it must remain, for aught any human power can do, forever. Fearful is the possession which many a man on this earth has to-day in the character which he has constructed. If he could only be rid of it, drop it as a worn-out and filthy garment, bury it in the sea, flee from it by escaping to the most distant spot of the earth, or even by lying down in the grave, it would be less fearful. But it is his. He cannot leave it. Go where he will, he carries this possession. It is a part of himself, and it must go with him.

V. Still another tablet on which our sins are written is the character of others, those with whom we mingle and the generations that come after us. No man is wholly without influence. Every man contributes something to mould the character of others. There can be no such thing as an entirely isolated life. And the aggregate of a wicked man's corrupting influence for a single year, could it be fully esti-

mated, would startle us. Every day it is going forth as a contamination in the moral atmosphere which others are breathing. But this ceases not at death. Character lives and acts long after the body dies. Men who have been centuries in their graves, and whose bodies have long since returned to dust, are to-day felt in society as a force for good or for evil. They still live in their examples, their transmitted characters. And there are men to-day living whose lives will not have expended their force for centuries to come. Men distinguished for goodness and men distinguished for wickedness are alike imperishable in their influence. To both classes there pertains a mighty posthumous power. And though all men are not eminent, there is not one, even the most lowly of an obscure village, who does not leave the impress of his life a blessing or a curse to some. A skeptical word carelessly uttered, a sneer at revelation made generations back, may have been the seed from which confirmed unbelief in many minds of to-day sprang. Words and deeds of men of vice and crime, like the stone dropped in the still lake, are sending forth wider and still wider circles of evil influence for ages. How many of the youth of our land are to-day bearing on their characters the impress of the skepticism of Paine, or of the immorality of Byron's life and writings! Engraven on the character of generations are the sins of such men. And men less conspicuous make their impression in the same manner, but on a more limited circle. It is a fearful thought, this immortality of influence! How startling the thought that I may to-day commit a sin, utter a word, pen a sentence, perform an act, the evil effect of which shall be living and spread-

ing centuries hence, showing itself in the characters of multitudes in that distant period. The sins of ages past are thus reappearing in the characters of the present, written there as with a pen of iron. The profanity, the intemperance, the licentiousness, the sabbath-breaking, and the infidelity of the present have thus been transmitted. They have come down to us from men now in their graves. And thus in their turn will these sins again reappear after those who now commit them have passed away.

VI. I mention one other tablet, — that on which the sins of all men are registered, — God's book of remembrance. In the vision of Patmos John saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God. And he saw the books brought forward and opened, and men were judged out of the things which were written in the books. We need not stop to inquire what these books are to be, but may we not conclude one is the memory of God? Omnipresent and omniscient, He is cognizant of the sins of every human being. The earliest sin of childhood and the latest sin of old age and all the intervening sins of a long life have been seen and are remembered by Him. No darkness, or secrecy, or pretence has concealed a single act or volition from his all-seeing eye. There is no cloak that can hide from his all-penetrating look. With us He has been everywhere, and at all times, and with us to see and to remember. Rarely do we reflect upon it, and yet when we do reflect on it we know that God has treasured in his memory each sin we have ever committed. There, though long years have passed away, there it lives, this moment, as distinct as though it were of the last hour. It can never fade out. Each oath of the blasphemer,

each falsehood of the liar, each fraud of the fraudulent man, and every resisted appeal and stifled conviction and broken vow of the impenitent man,—these are all remembered by the God with whom we have to do, and in whose presence we are hastening to stand. Can we realize it? Is it so? Is all of each life of the countless millions of the race recorded there? Oh, what a tablet is that—the Infinite memory! Think for one moment that in its keeping are all the secret and all the public sins of the lives of all men,—those long since dead and those now on earth. There, my hearers, are our sins. No one of them is forgotten. The sin, the motive, the attending circumstances, the consequences, as they have since been developed, they are all there, and no created power can destroy the record.

1. In view of this discussion, how awful does sin appear! Not the great crimes which startle and shock whole communities, not those merely, but all sin. How fearful a thing it is to sin against God! Fools make a mock at sin, treat it as a trifle. We all talk of little sins, minor transgressions. But is any sin small, any violation of the divine law a trifle? Little do any of us realize that our sins are ever recording themselves on the tablets which God has prepared: some of them on these bodies; all of them on the soul, its memory, and its conscience; many of them on society around us, and on coming generations; and every one of them on God's book of remembrance. The record of them must live. If we were done with the sin when once committed, if that were the last of it, if neither here nor hereafter we were ever to meet it, then might we trifle with it. But now, under the actual conditions of our

being, we know it is written as with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond, on imperishable tablets, and we must meet it again. Sin once committed is beyond our recall. The word spoken cannot be taken back. The deed done cannot be undone. The step taken cannot be retraced. Oh, think of it, the indestructible nature of sin, the immortality of the record which is made of it! Time wears out the inscription on the hardest stone. A hundred years may efface the words which affection has carved on the tombstone of to-day. But centuries added to centuries may pass, and leave the record of this hour's crime as distinct and legible as it now is. Is sin, any sin, a trifle?

2. We see how indissoluble is the connection between sin and its punishment. There may be, for aught I know, — the Scriptures seem to teach there is, — a positive infliction in the punishment of another world, though I see no proof of it and feel no necessity for it. But however that may be, let men decide it as they may, our subject teaches us that sin cannot escape its penalty. A mysterious, unseen, but irresistible law is everywhere working to effect it. Sin is its own terrible punishment, it generates the judgment. By doing sin every man sows for himself anguish. We have only to think of one's closing his probation and passing on to eternity with the uneffaced and ineffaceable record of the sins of a lifetime, carrying this with him, and going to meet it there, to see how certain is retribution. I know not what the blessed Jesus meant by the unquenchable fire, and the undying worm, and the outer darkness, but sure I am there will be enough in the natural, unarrested consequences of a life of sin to justify

the use of this terrific imagery. Let memory bring up all the sins of the past, and let conscience be there to condemn them, and let all the evil that has flowed from these sins to others be revealed, and let all hope of change and pardon be taken away, and we need add nothing more to the picture to make it as fearful as any drawn by the pen of inspiration or conceived by the human mind. By every transgression man is laying up food for future reproach. "He is widening the field over which thought will pass in bitterness and mow down remorse." He is adding one more item to that fearful catalogue which memory will hold up forever to the gaze of the soul. Nothing then but a direct interposition of omnipotence, arresting the natural course of the great moral laws of the universe, can save a sinner from punishment. Left of God to reap the fruits of his own doings, he must be miserable. He has treasured up, stored away in his own nature, the elements of coming retribution. You do not believe God will permit any of his creatures to suffer hereafter! It seems to you unreasonable, cruel, incredible! But to deny it is to deny the nature of sin and the constitution of the human soul; to deny it is to shut your eyes to the workings of a mighty law, which is irresistible and omnipresent.

3. But finally,— and I gladly turn to the thought,— we may see the perfect adaptation of the gospel to the sinner's condition. It comes with gracious provisions suited to every necessity. It brings offers of pardon. The sentence of the law is arrested, by the sufferings of One who has become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. God can now be just and

SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST.¹

Wherefore He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. — HEB. vii. 25.

THERE are two states of mind directly opposed to each other, and equally opposed to our salvation, — presumption and despair. They have both, singular as it may seem, the same origin, — unbelief. Now the Bible, perfect in its adaptation, coming from Him who made the soul and knows all its tendencies and wants, addresses both these states of mind. Is unbelief producing indifference and presumption, causing a thoughtless unconcern, leading one to cast off fear and restrain prayer, to him the Bible speaks in tones of terrific warning; calling on him to awake, to consider, to be alarmed, to flee from the wrath to come; following him to the last hour of life with its startling appeals; seeking to arouse him from his fatal slumbers. It cannot be doubted that this is ordinarily in all communities the prevailing state of mind. Men, without thought or examination, are carelessly presuming all is well, and passing on with no apprehension to eternity.

But there is another state, in which a smaller num-

¹ Brookline, April 3, 1864.

ber are included, the direct opposite of this. It is that of the despondingly anxious. In this are included those who have been aroused to see, with more or less clearness, their guilt and exposure, and are seldom quite at ease, and sometimes deeply moved. The death of a friend, a pungent sermon, a word of exhortation, the conversion of one whom they have known, or the intelligence of a revival of religion fills them with solicitude. They know they are not saved, and they often fear they never shall be. At times it seems to them impossible they ever should be. To such the Bible speaks in tones of beseeching tenderness, and the gospel opens a vast treasury of promises, exceeding great and precious. Before such, weary and heavy laden, Jesus stands, saying, Come, come unto me, and I will give you rest.

My text is one of the passages through which God speaks to such. Paul is unfolding to his brethren of the Jews the priesthood of Christ, and setting forth its superiority to the priesthood so revered among them. This having been illustrated in several particulars, he comes to its permanency, its ever-enduring character. Under the old priesthood the office was continually changing. The priests, like other men, were mortal. They passed away, and the priestly service fell into other hands, till there had been a long succession of priests. Not so with Christ. This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

It has been questioned whether the words "to the

uttermost" mean entirely or forever ; whether the reference is to the perfection or the duration of the salvation. But I prefer to think that both ideas are included ; that the Apostle used the phrase in its most comprehensive sense, as including the completeness and the eternity of the work.

The ability of Christ to save unto the uttermost, in this broad sense, is the precious theme of our discourse. Are any of my hearers of the class described, are they anxious about their salvation, feeling an unexpressed solicitude, for them I have chosen my theme ; and now let me invite their special attention to its discussion, and may they have faith while I am speaking to lay hold on the hope here set before them. I shall speak of what is embraced in salvation to the uttermost, present the evidences of Christ's ability to bestow this, and show on whom He bestows it.

I. What is embraced in salvation to the uttermost.

Salvation to the uttermost is an expression of great strength. It cannot mean less than a complete deliverance, an entire salvation. This includes, —

1. Redemption from the curse of the law. To this every man is exposed, because every man is a sinner. There is not one on whom the condemnation of God's broken law does not rest, and therefore not one who can be justified by the deeds of the law. Do what he may, suffer what he may, make life one long, unintermitted penance, and still the law condemns him. He is under its sentence, exposed to its penalty. And when we speak of the penalty of the divine law, we speak of that of which we can have but a feeble conception. The words are quickly, easily, uttered, but their far-reaching significance, — who can

comprehend it? The Scriptures labor through material imagery to set before us the spiritual meaning of the unarrested consequences of sin. These images are found in the teachings of Christ and of his apostles, and though, as we firmly believe, they are but images, who can realize that which they are designed to show forth, the penalty of the law of God? But from this, whatever it is, salvation to the uttermost includes a complete deliverance. There is a form of theology, professedly more cheerful in its views, that denies the possibility of any such perfect deliverance. It teaches the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness, but asserts the impossibility of wholly arresting the consequences of past guilt. Crime once committed, though pardoned, must leave ineffaceable traces on the soul. But the gospel, we think, presents a more perfect Saviour, and teaches a more entire salvation than that. All, all penalty is removed. The law is satisfied. Christ has redeemed us, not partially, but wholly, from its curse, being made a curse for us. By Him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free, says Paul, from the law of sin and death. Could language be stronger, clearer, more emphatic, on this point? Can you express a deliverance from condemnation and penalty more entire than that which these and similar texts express? Every demand met, all condemnation taken away, entire justification granted — in this respect the salvation of Christ is to the uttermost. Blotted out, erased, leaving no trace of the record, is the handwriting of the law which is against us.

2. But more is included, — the pollution of sin is washed away. One of the most frequent and expressive representations of sin is that of a defilement. Behold, said Job, I am vile. And David, in the bitterness of his penitence, cries out, Cleanse me, wash me, make me clean. And thousands of others have felt as did Job and David. Every one who has been aroused to a spiritual consciousness of his own guilt can appreciate this language. He knows its meaning. He has felt not only that he was condemned and needing pardon, but polluted and needing cleansing. A soul stained, defiled by sin, — such has been the consciousness of many; is it not of some now here? But salvation to the uttermost meets this experience and its consequent craving. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Christ gave himself that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people. The last of the Old Testament prophets predicted of Him that He should sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and his name was called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins.

Ah, that would be a partial and meagre salvation, unworthy of Christ to bestow or of man to receive, that only removed the penalty and left the sin. Nay, it is an impossible salvation. Sin is its own penalty. It generates the judgment. Sin and misery are indissolubly united. It is only, therefore, by taking away the sin that the penalty can be removed; and Christ, the perfect Saviour, saves from sin's consequences by saving from sin — snatches from death by curing the disease. This is included in that salvation to the uttermost which He gives.

3. But this is not all. We have thus far considered the individual in his relation to past sins. For these the law condemns him, and by these he is polluted. But grant that all this is removed, the condemnation lifted off, and the pollution washed away, and the soul justified and cleansed, still he is in a world filled with evil, and he is subjected to the wiles of a powerful and cunning adversary. What shall he do? There is a future as well as a past for which he needs a Saviour. Left to himself, in such a world as this, he will assuredly fall, and can no more keep himself in a state of salvation than he could at first bring himself into it. Just as easily could he originate grace in his heart, wash away his sins, and deliver himself from the curse of the law as he could abide in this state when once brought into it. Salvation unto the uttermost, therefore, must provide for this necessity. A ship, tossed on some dangerous shoal, may by the aid of a skilful pilot be delivered from its perils, and guided out to the open sea, and put on its true course for the destined port; but if then left to the winds and currents of the ocean, it would only be to be driven again toward the same or similar perils, and finally wrecked. And thus would it be with the soul delivered from past guilt, and cleansed from past sins. But the gospel abounds in promises that just meet this exposure. The soul pardoned, its condemnation lifted off, is not left to itself. Christ is represented as taking up his abode in it: "Christ is in you of a truth;" "That Christ may dwell in your hearts." He is represented as the life of his people, pervading the soul as life does the body which it animates: "Christ who is your life;" "He that hath the Son hath life;" "Christ liveth in

me." And again, as leading them, as a shepherd leads and guards his flock: "He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them;" "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

So varied and ample are the promises by which the wants of the regenerated soul are met. The same gracious hand that lifts it out of the horrible pit and miry clay still holds it. The guide that turns its feet into the narrow way leads it along the whole length of that way. Delivered by the power of God, it is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

4. And finally, salvation to the uttermost is eternal. It is no mere temporal or uncertain deliverance. He whom Christ saves is saved with an everlasting salvation. "Being made free from sin, and become the servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Christ, being made perfect, "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Everlasting life, eternal salvation, — familiar terms. Many times we have used them, heard them; but where shall we stand to take in their significance? But such is the salvation of which Christ is the author. When everything else shall have lost its value, — all wealth, honor, friendships, — when all on which the affections fix shall have passed away, the earth we tread, and the heavens that bend over us, then will the salvation which Christ gives to-day to some seeking soul be enduring still. It is eternal, because He ever liveth.

II. But what are the proofs of Christ's ability thus to save? The text asserts that He is thus able to save unto the uttermost, and invites every soul to trust Him for this. But it is no blind confidence which the gospel demands. Aroused, then, to see

and feel my guilt, and trembling in view of my peril, what evidence have I that Christ can save me? I am hanging over a fearful precipice, by a slender hold, alive to my danger and seeing no way of escape, when one says, "Let go your hold, and I will save you. Just trust to me." But can you do it? I ask. So to the burdened, imperilled soul Christ says, "Let go your hold on all else. I will save you. Trust in me." But can you do it? My text says He has the ability, and the whole teaching of the Scriptures confirms it. And —

1. He is, Christ is, the very God. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." "I and my Father are One." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also." "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me." Such are some of the claims of the Being who is offered to men as a Saviour. Can you set any bounds to the power of such a Being? Is there room to doubt his ability? Within the humble form of that Galilean youth who dwelt on earth, and went over Palestine with his little band of disciples, was all the fulness of the Godhead. The agonized and anxious father who brought to Him his demoniac son, when Jesus said, "If thou canst believe," looked on Him through his tears, and replied, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." And yet, why could he not at once and without a doubt believe? It seems to us, if we had been in that father's place, with all the proofs before us of Christ's ability to heal the sick, and cast out devils, and even raise the dead, which He had, — it seems to us that belief would have been easy. We think that proofs appealing directly to the senses, such as were furnished by miracles, would have wrought conviction. Had

we seen Him calm the tempest by a word, call Lazarus from the tomb in which he had been four days, touch the bier of the widow's son and bid him rise, we think we could never have distrusted his power. Unbelief would have been impossible. But it was not impossible. Many turned away from these mighty works with no faith in Him who wrought them. And, indeed, have we not all around us evidences of Christ's power as strong as those of miracles? We know creation is ascribed to Him. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything, made that was made. As I was walking, some time since, beneath a clear sky, from which a thousand stars were looking down on me, my thoughts were carried out over those measureless fields which these distant worlds occupy and traverse. I thought of what astronomers have told us of the vastness of these globes, and of the extent of their orbits. The whole earth seemed but a speck in the midst of such a universe, scarcely more than a leaf in the foliage of an extended forest, and man but an insect on it. And then came the thought that these worlds, vast as they are, countless in number, moving through their wide orbits, worlds on worlds and systems on systems, were all created by Him who is presented as the sinner's Saviour. And as my mind took in these evidences of his power with which the universe is filled, I said, Shall I fear to trust my soul in his hands? Shall I doubt his ability to save any soul that will commit itself to Him? He said to one sick of the palsy, lying prone and helpless, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk," that He might convince those who looked on of his power to forgive sins. He has spread before us a universe so vast that we

can neither measure it nor conceive of its extent, and then revealing himself its Creator, asserts his power to save us. Shall we doubt it? Oh! this doctrine of Christ's Deity is not, as sometimes asserted, a mere speculation. It is not a matter of indifference whether we accept or reject it. The soul needs an almighty Saviour. And there are exigencies of its experience when it feels this, when it asks for one who is omnipotent, on whom its faith may rest. And such is Christ in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, — who thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

2. But what He has done proves his ability to save. It is admitted that He might be omnipotent, and that alone not prove his ability to save. A work must be done differing from that of creation, calling into exercise another kind of power. The obstacle to be removed was not one which creative energy could grasp. It was a moral obstacle, to be taken out of the way by moral means. Suffering, expiation, substitution, that was what was needed, some provision by which the mercy which saves should not conflict with the justice that condemns. This was the problem, — How shall a just God justify a guilty sinner? And Christ has solved it, by his mission of sufferings and death; He has solved it. Thus has He earned the ability to save; by his own vicarious sufferings He has earned it. No attribute of God is tarnished, no claim of law violated now, when Christ saves any sinner, the guiltiest that lives. He has magnified and made honorable the law as no obedience of men or of angels could. In the exhaustless efficacy of his great atoning sacrifice lie hidden the elements of his power to save. He has become the end, the sat-

isfaction of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth. When bowing his head on the cross of his sufferings He said, It is finished ; this it is that was finished, the mighty achievement of paying the full price of man's redemption. It was then finished, done forever, needing no addition, and from that cross Jesus rose to heaven with power to save unto the uttermost. The sins of the world had been laid on Him, and He had borne them. A ransom was needed, and He had given his life as that ransom. The grand moral purpose of setting the mark of God's indignation upon sin was there accomplished. There is not a man whose sins He has not borne, not one for whom He has not died, and therefore there is not one whom He is not able to save.

3. But another proof. He lives to intercede for us. This is the argument of the text, " Seeing He ever liveth to intercede for us." It was the priesthood of Christ which Paul was unfolding, contrasting it with that of the old dispensation now ended. The Jewish priests died and their work was done. Neither on earth nor elsewhere could they continue it. Jesus died, and has passed from human sight, entered within the vail, but his work for us is not done. There He ever liveth, and ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. We think much and say much of the death of Christ. It has a large place in our theology. Our thoughts go often to his cross. His death, his sacrifice, his blood, his cross, — we are ever recurring to these. And in this we are right. The Bible is full of these references,— the great, finished work of the Redeemer. But do we often enough follow Christ up to his place above, and bring Him before us in the blessed work which

He is now carrying forward in our behalf? There is great consolation, great assurance in this thought. Paul here bases his argument for Christ's ability to save wholly on this. And you remember a similar argument in his Epistle to the Romans, Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. To the Romans he presents the power of Christ's intercession as a proof that they cannot be condemned. To the Hebrews he presents the power of his ceaseless intercession as proof of his ability to save. And in this light let me present it to you. It is not a Christ who once was, a Jesus who did live eighteen centuries ago but is now dead, who then accomplished a work in which He has ever since ceased to be interested, in whom we ask you to trust; but a Jesus who lives to-day, and makes intercession for you. Visit Calvary and the cross as much as you will, and open your heart to the influences that stream therefrom. The world would be dark, and our condition hopeless, our ruin certain, but for the transactions there. But do not fail in thought to visit that throne at the right hand of which is He who once was crucified, who also makes intercession for us, and gather assurance from it that He is able to save. And there is ground of confidence here. The very Jesus who died, lives; He who was once the victim, is now in the holiest of holies on high to present his own blood. He, therefore, who now comes bending under the weight of his sins, feeling that he has no merit and never can have any, if he comes through Christ, may avail himself of his presence and influence with the Father, as though all the character and

merit of Christ were his own. Our sins plead against us, with a terrible urgency and emphasis, but they are more than offset by his righteousness and blood pleading for us. And He ever liveth to make intercession for us, appearing ever in the presence of the Father for us ; therefore He is able to save unto the uttermost.

4. But one proof more of Christ's ability. He has already begun and completed the work of salvation for multitudes—an innumerable company. Facts, in all reasonings, are convincing. I can conceive of myself as the first to whom Christ is offered as a Saviour. His ability is asserted. The proofs of it are adduced. But still I ask, Have any been saved by Him ? Has his ability been tested ? And though then I might feel that I ought to believe, and might struggle to believe, yet I can conceive how I might wish that there were one, only one, by whose salvation my confidence might be assured — one witness. But from such a supposed position let us return to the real state of the case. There is a great cloud of witnesses of all ages, nations, languages, and conditions who have been justified, and sanctified, and saved by Christ. He has been made of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption to a countless number, and each one of these is an independent witness that Christ can save unto the uttermost. For salvation is personal, individual, as really and entirely so as though there were but one on earth who needed it. The isolation in which God places us and treats with us on this subject is perfect. Not as communities, as churches, or as families are we saved, but as individuals. Therefore is each one saved, as we have said, an independent

witness. He may say, Christ can save, for He has saved me. How myriad voiced, then, is the testimony as it comes down to us from the past, and rises up from the present. Do you hesitate to believe you can be saved — shrink from trusting yourself at once and wholly to Christ? After all that has been said, does it seem too much to believe He can and will save you? Are you the chief of sinners? There was a man once who, not without reason, thought himself such. There was much in his life to countenance and strengthen such a conclusion. Very painful was the review of his heart and life to him. But he obtained mercy, Christ saved him, and, panting to be useful, he has left some sayings on record that might help those who were hesitating and doubting. Hear one of these: "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on his name." That is, put into briefer and more modern phrase, I obtained mercy on purpose that I might be a pattern to all who should seek the mercy of Christ afterwards, that none need despair. Did He not save Saul of Tarsus? The thief on the cross in the last hour of life? Are there not many among the redeemed who have been reclaimed from the lowest deep of sin and raised to heaven? Imagine you could stand at the portal of heaven and ask the question, Can Christ save me? From a myriad of voices would come the response, Yes, for He saved me, the chief of sinners. He saved me, who deserved, above all others, to be lost. He has saved

me, let none despair ; He can save unto the uttermost.

III. On what conditions.

It is, indeed, a precious, cheering theme which we have striven to unfold — the ability of Christ to save unto the uttermost. The proofs of it are numerous and strong. From the nature of Christ, from the work He has done, from what He is now doing, from the testimony of the saved on earth and in heaven, from all these come the corroborating evidences of the truth asserted in my text, Wherefore He is able to save unto the uttermost. Will not then all be saved ? So reason some, and they rest in the conclusion. But what says our text ? Able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. None beside. So far the text extends his ability, no farther. It becomes, then, a question of immense moment, What is it to come unto God by Christ ?

It is to come unto God. We are all, by nature, at a distance from Him, separated by a broad, moral separation. Without God in the world, this is the fearful fact of our condition. And the want, the grand, imperative need of every soul, is to come to God. Hence the calls which abound in the Scriptures: Return unto me ; Seek ye the Lord ; Come unto me. But the requisition of the text is more specific, them that come unto God by Him, by Christ. This gives the evangelic character to the requirement. Men without the gospel, under the darkness of paganism, have felt their need of God ; the soul has cried out after Him ; and they have groped long and blindly to find Him, substituting often the meanest and most hideous objects in the place of Him. And men, in lands of gospel light, have been aroused

to feel this want, and sought long and unsuccessfully to find God, in ways and by methods of their own. Ah! my hearers, the old experiment, which never did succeed, and never will, is still tried, to find God, and pardon and reconciliation from Him, without Christ. But what then is it to come by Christ? I think it may all be expressed in two simple conditions: to feel our need of Christ, and by faith to accept Him. He came to be the Mediator. Do I need one? Is Christ such a one as I need, and do I accept Him? A renunciation of myself, all righteousness and merit of my own; this is the first step. A discovery and reliance on Christ as able to save me; this is the second and final step. He who has had this experience has already come unto God by Christ. He has stepped out of himself into Christ. He has taken the tattered and filthy robe of his own righteousness, which he has vainly striven to cleanse and make decent, and has cast it away, consenting to appear before his Maker in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. He has admitted that he owed ten thousand talents; and a poor insolvent debtor, without a farthing, he has consented that Christ should pay the debt. This, in brief, is what it is to come unto God by Him. The path leads over Calvary and beneath the cross, — the path of the soul's return to God.

But why not come to God, without Christ, just as the prodigal came to his father, and as any wayward and repentant child of to-day would do. Why not, as one has preached recently, just come and put your arm around the Father's neck, and say, I am sorry, forgive me; I mean to do better? Because, my hearers, we have no warrant to come thus, no

promise to encourage us, no assurance of welcome. Because we are assured there is no other name given whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus. Because faith in Christ is the one indispensable condition of salvation. But why is not the necessity of an atonement and a mediator, of coming by Christ, not brought out in the story of the Prodigal Son? Because it was not designed to teach the whole system of theology there, and because it would have been unnatural and out of place in that story, which was designed to set forth the fact of God's pardoning love, and not the mode of its exercise. If mediation, atonement, salvation by Christ are taught elsewhere, as assuredly they are, shall I reject them because not introduced here?

But, not to argue this point, let me urge you to take the text, embrace it, rejoice in it, and make its precious assurance your own by faith. Wherefore He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Hence if there be one burdened, desponding soul here, one who is saying, Oh! that I knew I could be saved; here is the ground and the warrant of your hope, in a Saviour able to save unto the uttermost, in a Saviour who has saved countless millions, and offers to save you, now, and here, and forever.

“DOST THOU BELIEVE?”¹

Dost thou believe on the Son of God.— JOHN ix. 35.

THERE are times when the Christian preacher feels that he would like, were it possible, to break through the routine and formalities of the ordinary Sabbath service, and come nearer to his people, and in more direct and personal discourse bring the truth home to every heart. The pulpit seems too high above and too far away from the pews. He would like to speak as though he were sitting by the side of a person, or in the midst of a little circle of persons, presenting his views, meeting objections, and pressing his appeals. It is said of Edward Payson, that fervent and eloquent preacher of the gospel, that, under the influence of this feeling, he one Sabbath left his pulpit and took his stand beneath it, that he might, as he said, be nearer to his flock, and there poured out his heart in argument and entreaty till he himself and his whole congregation were melted to tears. And if we recall the preaching of Christ, as far as we are able from the brief notices handed down to us, this was its character. Simple, direct, personal, conversational, abounding in familiar illustrations, and especially abounding in interrogations

¹ Brookline, April 3, 1870.

which compelled the silent if not the uttered reply. My hearers, I have selected my text, a question which Jesus once put to a person on whom He had just wrought a miracle of healing, that I may put this same question to you individually. Let this, then, be my aim to bring and press the inquiry on each person in this congregation as directly as though there were no other present, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And may the Spirit enlighten each one to give to himself at least an honest and true answer.

I. I need not stop to show how great, beyond all expression or conception, is the importance attached to the question. The first and constantly reiterated command throughout the New Testament is "Believe, believe." Is it character? Faith is the foundation on which the whole superstructure rests. Lay the foundation, and then the life-work is to add stone after stone to the building till the structure is finished. Hence says the Apostle: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your *faith* virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." What a splendid grouping! How grand and beautiful and beneficent would be the character thus built up! But mark that the foundation, the first laid stone, is belief. Add to your faith this and that. Is it present peace you seek? For a troubled, agitated, burdened heart, are you seeking a resting-place? "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Is it victory over the world and sin? "This is the victory that overcometh the world,

even our faith." Is it freedom of access to God in prayer? "He that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." "Whatsoever ye ask, believing, ye shall receive." Is it deliverance from the law and its condemning power? "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Is it final salvation? "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned." "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" asked the trembling jailer. And they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Now, friend, you know I have but selected a few of the passages in which the importance of belief is brought before us. The New Testament abounds in them. It everywhere divides men into two classes, believers and unbelievers, and makes everything in the character and destiny of every man depend on the question to which of these divisions he belongs. The believer is justified, has peace with God, has access to Him in prayer, is freed from condemnation, is saved eternally. The unbeliever is condemned already, is under the abiding wrath of God, is unjustified, has no access to God, is without God and without hope. The passages are numerous, and each one emphatic, which might be brought together in parallels contrasting the condition, the character, and the prospects of the believer and the unbeliever. It would, perhaps, familiar though you may be with the New Testament, astonish you to sit down and with the aid of a good concordance search out the passages which teach the importance of belief and the peril of unbelief. They are found in the teachings

of Christ, and in the teachings of the apostles, and are too numerous and too positive to be disregarded or refuted. All, therefore, who admit the authority of the Bible, must admit that no question ever asked of another can transcend in importance that of my text. On the answer given to it depend the greatest interests and issues that can be conceived. A man threatened with a fatal disease, and undergoing an examination which is to decide whether it be that or something else, feels that the question is a momentous one. But how trifling compared with this, "Dost thou now believe?"

II. 1. There is a sense in which I will not doubt that every one here would give an affirmative answer to this question. There are many, perhaps an increasing number, who do not believe in Christianity. They avowedly reject it. They proclaim boldly their unbelief, and throw off the name Christian. I do not regret this. Let all who secretly discredit the gospel avow it. It will be better for the cause of truth. The sooner the line is distinctly drawn between infidelity on the one side and Christianity on the other the better. But I do not suppose there is one of my hearers who is avowedly infidel. You have what may be called a historic faith in Christianity, that is, such a faith as you have in the general records of history and biography. You read, for instance, Sparks' or Irving's "Life of George Washington," and as you go through the narrative of his birth, childhood, youth, public life and death, there is not the shadow of a doubt that such a man lived, and that he was and did what is recorded of him. And thus of the life of Napoleon, and of hundreds of others. This is historic belief. Thus when you read the four brief

biographies of our Lord written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you receive them as true, and have not a doubt that such a man as Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, was brought up in Nazareth, entered on a brief ministry of three years, and died on the cross of Calvary. All sorts of attempts have been made to invalidate the story, to prove it only a myth, but you have never been influenced by them. Jesus Christ is to you a real person, who eighteen centuries ago lived, and acted, and died on this earth. So far, it may be safely assumed, there is not one present who is not a believer.

But I will go farther. You believe not only that there was such a person, but that what is recorded of Him is true, the supernatural, as well as the natural. You give credence to what is said of his origin, of his every-day life, of his miracles, showing a perfect control over nature, of his teachings, and above all of his resurrection from the dead. Multitudes who admit there was such a man as Jesus Christ, and that He was great and good, deny all that is supernatural and miraculous in the narratives of his life. These portions they regard as legendary tales invented by his followers, and intended to cast a halo of glory around their hero. Of course they reject his divine origin, believe Him to have been merely the son of Joseph, deny that He ever wrought a miracle, and have no idea that He ever rose from the dead. And yet they claim the name Christian, and say that they love and revere Christ. But as well deny the whole as a part; as well say the story is wholly a fiction, as admit a basis of truth and reject all that gives it any importance. For are we not indebted to the gospel for the knowledge that such

a person ever was? Have we not the same authority for the supernatural as for the natural in the life of Jesus? But I will suppose, my hearer, that you admit the whole gospel records as true. You believe that Jesus was superhuman in his origin; that He did the wonderful things recorded of him; that He healed the sick, calmed the sea, cast out devils, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and raised the dead; and that, to crown the whole, He rose from the dead himself and ascended to heaven. When you read the stories of these marvellous works, such as no other man ever did, it never occurs to you to question their truth, any more than it does to question the truth of the incidents in any accredited biography.

But one step more will I advance, and suppose you to admit that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and to assent to the truth of his teachings. There may be that which seems to you mysterious, above your comprehension in those teachings, still you do not reject them. You admit that He was a Teacher sent from God, and what He taught must be true.

Perhaps there is not one of my hearers who, asked if he was a believer in the senses named, would not answer, yes. You do believe that a man called Jesus was born into this world and lived in it thirty-three years, and then died on the cross. You do believe that He wrought miracles of astonishing variety and power. You do believe that He came to be a Saviour, and that the doctrines He taught are true.

Well now what is wanting? Does not all this constitute one a believer on the Son of God? May one go as far as I have stated and yet not be in the true,

evangelical sense a believer? An important inquiry, and one which I am anxious to answer. I am often met by it in private conversations. Pressing a short time since the subject of personal religion on an individual, and urging the necessity for faith in Christ, I was met by the reply, "I am a believer in Christ." But on inquiry, I found, as I expected, that what he meant was that he admitted the truth of Christianity, he was not an infidel. Of such believers in Christ the Christian world is full. They are the great majority in all our populations. And is this not enough? If not, why?

2. I wish you, my hearer, to answer the question yourself, and shall therefore point you to some of the fruits of true belief, and ask if you can claim them.

(1.) True belief in Christ brings reconciliation with God. Justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And let me say that this is a positive experience of the soul. It is something more than the absence of the feeling of condemnation. This thousands have had all their lives, this Saul of Tarsus had before his conversion. This is peace, but the peace of death, and not of life. But the peace which is the fruit of evangelic faith is a conscious peace, a peace which can be felt, and expressed. The soul is as sure of it as it is of any other exercise. Now, my hearer, has your belief in the gospel ever brought to you this conscious peace, so that you could say, "To God I'm reconciled"? When you read or hear the words of Paul, "justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," does your heart respond, "I have felt that! It is true!"

(2.) Another of the invariable fruits of true belief

is prayer, the spirit and the practice. As soon as Saul believed it was said of him, "Behold he prayeth." This was given as conclusive evidence that he had believed. And what was said of him might have been said of every early disciple, "Behold he prayeth." These disciples, whatever had been true of them before, now entered on a life of prayer. While they were yet with Jesus, and listening to his prayers, they besought Him that He would teach them how to pray, and after his death they were constantly carrying everything that burdened or troubled them to God. You cannot read the Acts of the Apostles, or the letters to the churches, without being impressed with the fact that early believers were preëminently prayerful. You cannot think of one of them who was prayerless. They communed with God. They went to Him in solitude, and they went to Him in companies. Social prayer and secret prayer characterized them. And what was true of them has been true of believers on the Son of God all down through the Christian centuries to the present time. My friend, has your professed belief in the gospel produced this fruit in you? has it begotten in you a desire and a love for communion with God? Has it brought into your heart the Spirit of adoption whereby you can cry, "Abba, Father?" If not, can it be the same belief which the early disciples had, and which made a throne of grace so dear to them? There has been nothing in the lapse of ages to make prayer any less a duty or a privilege than it was in the first century. The same temptations, duties, perils, hopes, and fears pertain to us as to the early believers. If then you do not pray and do not love prayer, can you regard yourself a believer? Can you think any one to be a believer on the Son of God who is living without prayer?

(3.) Another fruit of belief was a desire to confess Christ before the world. The command was, Believe, and be baptized. And these early believers in the face of threatenings, perils, persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, and death, boldly confessed Christ. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and went triumphantly through the pains of martyrdom for the privilege of confessing Christ before men. Nothing could bribe them, nothing deter them from this privilege and duty. Multitudes of believers in the first three centuries paid willingly the penalty of death for the privilege of thus confessing Christ. Have you ever confessed Christ? Has it ever seemed to you a duty and a privilege? There are no such sacrifices and penalties to be endured now. The cross is comparatively a light one. Still it is often a cross, even where there is a conviction of duty. Have you, my friend, ever taken' up this cross?

(4.) Another fruit of belief was a desire and effort to spread the faith,—to bring others to Christ. Andrew no sooner believed than he sought for Simon Peter, and brought him to Jesus. Philip believed, and went at once to bring Nathanael. The woman at the well of Sychar believed, and hastened to the city to invite others to come and see if He with whom she had conversed was not the Christ. And this was not an exceptional or temporary desire. Early believers were filled with an intense and sustained zeal to spread the faith. Never were men willing to make greater sacrifices, or perform greater labors to advance any cause, than were these early believers to advance Christianity. And this has been true of later believers. It was the purpose of Christ thus to spread and build up his kingdom on earth,

that each one who believed on Him should draw others to Him. His command is a command still as ever binding, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Now, friend, comes the question, Have you ever felt a desire, prompting to effort, to bring others to Jesus? Has your belief ever so identified you with the cause of Christ that you have felt it was your cause? Are you interested in its spread around you, and over the earth? If not, then here is another fruit of the early faith not seen in you. The invariable effect of belief on the Son of God in earlier and later periods of the Church has not been produced on you.

Still other fruits might be specified, but these are sufficient. You say, I will suppose, my friend, to the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Yes, I always believed on Him. I am not an unbeliever." I have named a few of the results of this belief as they were seen in the first believers, and as they have appeared in those of more recent times. Can you claim that such has been the effect of your belief?

3. But another proof, my friend, that what you call belief is not what the Scriptures mean by belief on the Son of God, is this: There have been many thousands, yea many millions, who, having lived for years in the belief which you profess, this admission of Christianity and assent to it as true, and have afterwards passed out of this into another kind of belief. Now it is true of every one of these millions that after this change he regarded himself as having been previously an unbeliever. He could not then call his assent to Christianity a belief on the Son of God. The transition from his former to his present

state has been like that from darkness to light. He has found belief on the Son of God an entirely new experience to him. And yet he was before this change just where you confessedly are now. He had the same belief then which you now profess. Is he right in regarding himself as having been then an unbeliever? Have the millions who have thus regarded themselves been mistaken? They are credible witnesses on all other subjects. We would receive their testimony on any other matter of observation or experience. Why not on this?

III. But having, my friend, defined what it is that goes under the name of belief, and having shown that it does not amount to a belief on the Son of God, do you ask what it is that constitutes this higher and peculiar belief? What enters into that faith which is in a true sense a belief on the "Son of God"? I answer, there are three essential steps in the process.

1. A sense of personal need. This may be more or less violent and intense, but it is in every case real. There is a felt want, a hunger, or a thirst of the soul. Did not the publican feel this when he cried, "God, be merciful to me a sinner"? And the jailer when he asked, "What shall I do to be saved"? And the thousands under the sermon of Peter when they cried out, "Men, brethren, what shall we do?" This feeling of need may not always fix itself on the same object. It sometimes may be a sense of sin, the pollution of it, a deep feeling of inward depravity, and the soul longs to be cleansed; or it may be the feeling of alarm, the soul filled with terrible apprehensions, and looking for a refuge, a shelter from impending wrath. Or it may be the feeling that moral help is

needed. The individual has been assailed and fallen, assailed and fallen again. He has summoned all the energy of his own resolution, but he has been overcome. Weak, helpless, despairing, his whole soul goes out in desire for a moral helper, one whose strength is mightier than his, and through whose might he can overcome. Or it may be a longing for a friendship, such as the world cannot give, more real, abiding, effective than that of any human being. But whatever it is on which the thought fastens, whatever the peculiarity of the individual experience, this remains true of all, they have a deep sense of need. The soul wants what it has not, what the world cannot give. It hungers and thirsts. I am not insisting on the degree, but only on the reality of this feeling of need. This, I think, must exist. Jesus teaches it when He says, "They that be whole," that is, they who think themselves whole, "need not a physician, but they that are sick." Can one believe on Christ who has never felt his need of Him? Believe on Him for what? He is a Saviour. But you do not need one? He lifts off the terrible condemnation of God's broken law. But you do not feel condemned. His blood cleanses the soul, washing out the foulest stains of guilt. But you have no feeling of defilement. He is the mighty helper giving strength to the weak, courage to the faint-hearted, and victory to the vanquished. But you do not need a helper. You are strong in your own strength. He is the bread and water of life, food to the famished and drink to the thirsty. But you are neither hungry nor thirsty. How can you believe on Him for what you never felt that you needed? O friend, here, here is the difficulty. It is all in the words of Christ, "they that be whole need not a physician."

2. But when the want is felt, the soul feels that it is sick, then there must be a perception of Christ's ability to meet the want. In whatever form the sense of need comes, the adaptation of Christ to meet and satisfy it must be seen. "O wretched man that I am," exclaimed Paul, "wretched man that I am." "Who shall deliver me?" I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. The perception of Christ, his greatness and power, of his work, its perfection and extent and complete adaptation, needs to be seen. He is able to save.

The individual is now like a sick man thoroughly convinced of his disease, and of its fatal character, and who is brought into the presence of a physician in whom he has full confidence, and a remedy that he believes to be efficacious. He believes in his need, and he believes that necessity can be met. But could you conceive of one thus situated and thus convinced stopping just there, of what avail would it be? Would confidence in a physician to whom he refused to commit himself, and in a remedy which he refused to apply, avail anything? As well not believe at all as go no farther. And thus in the case of the sinner and Christ. However clearly he sees his need, and however freely he acknowledges the ability and willingness of Christ, another step must be taken or the work is undone, the crisis is not passed.

3. That other final and crowning step is the committal of the soul to Christ. In one word it is trust. It is the reaching forth of the invisible hands of the soul and grasping the invisible Christ. It is the actual surrender of the soul into his hands. Paul saw the greatness, and glory, and ability of Christ as the Saviour of the world. He exulted in the intellectual

perception, a constantly growing one, of what Christ was, the express image of the Father, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, who claimed an equality with the Father, who was God manifest in the flesh. But beyond this Paul had a more personal faith which he thus expresses: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Here was the act. He had committed, intrusted his soul to Him. There was a crisis when he was conscious of doing this. And now not a doubt of his ability remained. He was fully persuaded. Sometimes the word is look, sometimes it is come, sometimes believe, and again it is commit; but whatever the term used, this is the underlying idea — trust, trust.

Now then I have prepared the way to press home on the heart of every hearer the question, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? My hearer, I do not ask whether you are in this church, or in some other, or in none. I ask not what have been your professions, or whether you have ever made any. But this is the question which by the help of God I would lay on the conscience of every hearer: Dost thou believe on the Son of God? And if thou canst not say, I do, wilt thou, in view of all the solemn and alarming declarations of the Bible, rest till thou canst thus say? These, my hearers, are the words not of man, but of Inspiration itself: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Can so much depend on the simple question of my believing? Let Jesus answer: "He that believeth not is condemned already." Why?

Still let Jesus answer: "Because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Could language plainer and more emphatic be used?

A professed religious teacher recently told his congregation, "It is not believing, but doing, on which Jesus insists." Is it so? Let any one familiar with the New Testament answer, or let any one take a concordance and look out all the passages in which believe and believing are found, and then answer. The first command of the New Testament and the ever repeated command is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation turns on this. A company of Jews once put the direct question to Jesus: "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" Here was the question. Never was a finer opportunity to set men on a course of *doing*, if that had been the aim of Jesus. But what was his answer? "This," *this* "is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." And thus all through the teachings of Christ. Did one need help? If thou believest. All things are possible to him that believeth. And whatever the request, the response was, If thou believest.

It may be, I hope it is, true that some one has come here this morning burdened, anxious, inquiring, asking within his own soul the question, What must I do to be saved? Believe me, my friend, the eighteen centuries since the jailer fell trembling in the jailyard of Philippi, with this question on his lips, have brought no other answer than that which Paul there gave, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It was God's answer to the question then. It is God's answer to the question now. And we have no reason to expect any other

answer to it while the world stands, or while there is a sinner to be saved. I would not dare give any other answer than this. It is the only and the sufficient answer, Believe, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST IN OUR CONVERSION.¹

That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. — PHIL. iii. 12.

THE English verb to apprehend is now, I think, mostly used to describe a mental act. We speak of apprehending a truth where the idea is to conceive of it, or take it into the mind. But the primary and more ancient meaning of the word referred to a physical act, a seizing, or laying hold of with the hands. Hence it was used, as we now use the word arrest, as where an officer arrests a criminal. This is the meaning of the Greek word, here translated apprehend, to seize, or to lay hold on.

There can be no question as to what fact in his life Paul refers to when he says he was apprehended of Christ Jesus. It was the greatest fact in his history: his conversion. Remembering the circumstances of that conversion we do not wonder that he looked back upon it as a seizure, an apprehension. Recall the incidents. He is on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus on an errand of persecution. There are no misgivings, no reproofs of conscience, for he thoroughly believes he is doing God's service,

¹ November 22, 1868.

and he is legally authorized by men. Thus fortified, as he believes, by a divine and a human commission, he pursues his journey, and is already approaching the city, expecting in a few hours to be within its walls hunting down and dragging to prison all who were disciples of Christ. Never, perhaps, was there an hour when he was more at ease, more satisfied with himself or with his work. But he was suddenly waylaid, not by a band of armed men, not by any human force, but by an invisible hand, waylaid, and arrested. "Christ had waylaid him, and a brief challenge from his lips" had brought him to a stand. It was a hand that seized his soul, and a voice that spoke to his inmost heart. There in a moment he underwent an entire change and became a new creature.

It is not strange that in reviewing this wonderful scene he should think and speak of himself as having been then and there apprehended, seized upon by the Lord Jesus. It was no conjecture. He never could doubt as to who it was that there met him. For when fallen to the earth he heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And when he asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" immediately the reply came, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." We do not wonder, therefore, that ever afterwards he regarded himself as having been arrested, seized upon by Christ Jesus.

True there are many conversions which have little in them resembling that of this bold and violent persecutor. He was in every sense a singular man, and his conversion and his whole Christian course were marked. It was fitting that they should be. And yet is it true that every conversion of a soul to God

is the apprehension of that soul by the Lord Jesus? Means may have been employed. The gospel may have been preached, private persuasion employed, solemn providences may have uttered their voices, and a long period of inquiry and thoughtfulness may have preceded the change, but the efficient power was in none of these. The soul has been apprehended by Christ Jesus. It is his invisible hand that has been laid upon it, and has wrought the change within it. He has done it as truly in the gentlest conversion, the consciousness of which breaks on the soul gradually as does the light of the morning, as in the conversion of the persecuting Saul, with the light above the mid-day sun, and the voices from heaven, and all the supernatural manifestations that accompanied it. It is the souls that Christ apprehends that are regenerated.

But Paul thought Christ had a purpose in his conversion, and in my text he declares it the object of his life to accomplish that purpose. "I follow on, if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." He recognized the purpose of Christ in the change wrought in him. But mark, he did not sink his personal responsibility here. Christ's purpose did not relieve him. He had a work to do. An obligation was resting on him. I follow on, press forward. No man ever believed more fully in divine purposes than did Paul; they embraced everything in regard to both himself and others. Yet he believed in them in a way that left the whole pressure of personal responsibility resting on him. He could not indolently repose in the thought that the will of the Lord will be done. The doctrine of the divine sovereignty and that of human responsibility

were never in conflict in his mind. The human instrumentality and the divine efficiency were both needed, and both contributed to the accomplishment of the one end.

But the main thought is this: Christ had a purpose in Paul's conversion. This he believed and felt. He was apprehended for an end. And as we read the history of his subsequent life, his journeys and preachings, the souls converted and the churches established, the perils undergone, and the sufferings endured, till his heroic life was closed by a martyr's death, and when we add to that the force which he has ever been, by his writings and his example, in the world, all down to the present time, and remember that all this was seen and contemplated by Christ when He arrested and changed him, we feel that He had indeed a grand and glorious purpose in his conversion. No event in the early Christian history, perhaps none in the later, was so momentous and far-reaching as that. Paul never fully comprehended it. We cannot measure it. It has entered as a power into the whole history of the Christian Church, and its force is not yet expended or abated. Paul is in heaven. But Paul still lives on the earth, by his transmitted influence, and must live till the world ends. The purpose of Christ in his conversion is not yet accomplished.

And now, we admit it, perhaps no man on whom the grace of God has been bestowed was ever converted for a purpose so great and comprehensive as was he. The Church has had but one Paul. It is not to be expected it will ever have another. He stands, in some respects, alone, rising in solitary grandeur above all those whom Christian history

presents to us. And yet we affirm that Christ has a purpose in the regeneration of every soul on whom He puts forth his power. He has a place for him to fill, and a work for him to do, and he is as much bound as was Paul to follow after, that he may apprehend that for which also he is apprehended of Christ Jesus. Purpose of Christ as it was, Paul felt that he might fail of it. And purpose of Christ as it is, in regard to you, my brother, you may fail of it.

This purpose is, in some cases, specific. He converts some to be preachers of his gospel, some to be missionaries to the heathen, some that they may serve Him by their wealth, and, in some way, to the inquiring soul He indicates his purpose. Paul was a chosen vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles. And the question for the converted is, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The demand for ministers of the gospel is great and urgent. It is becoming painfully, almost alarmingly so. Fields white, waiting for the sickle of the reaper, at home and abroad, are calling for laborers. If we look into our colleges and theological schools and estimate the number that will come forth from them to replenish the thinned and thinning ranks of the ministry, and to occupy the new fields that are opening on every hand, we feel that for the next ten years there must be a sad disproportion between the demand and the supply. The cry will be everywhere, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." Now it is Christ's prerogative to call and send forth laborers. But as in every other department of divine efficiency, so here, He works through human agencies. The Church is to pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers unto his harvest. And young men whom

He has converted are to inquire for what they have been converted, what end had He in view in bringing them into his Church. I would have no one enter on the sacred work not called of God. But I would have every young man on whom He has bestowed his converting grace, and to whom He has given suitable talents, inquire if it is not his duty to look forward to the Christian ministry. To endeavor to live so near to Christ that the motions of his Spirit in his soul shall be felt. A call to the ministry may be resisted and suppressed as well as the call to any other duty. It is not irresistible, compulsory. It is leading, persuasive. I cannot but feel there are many young men in the evangelical churches of our land to-day who are resisting impressions, and stifling convictions, which, if yielded to, would send them at once to a preparation for this great and glorious work. I say great and glorious work, and I say it most heartily. After an experience of more than thirty years, in which I have endeavored most imperfectly to occupy this position, it grows on me in its grandeur and blessedness with every passing year. In looking back over my life there is nothing for which I am so grateful as for the privilege of preaching the gospel. The profession has its trials, as what profession has not? It has its crushing responsibilities, in view of which even Paul cried out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But it has its compensations, its satisfactions, its rewards, compared with which the emoluments and honors of any other profession are mean. Let, then, every young man, converted to Christ, while he waits for the divine call, and trembles at the thought of running before he is sent, cherish the feeling that the Master could confer on him no greater

honor, nor call him to any higher or more grateful work, than counting him faithful to put him into the ministry. Young men who have been apprehended of Christ Jesus, it is not mine to say for what specific purpose He has apprehended you. But it is yours thoughtfully, solemnly, prayerfully to ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and if in the stillness of the soul you have the response, "Go preach my gospel," welcome it, and obey it.

But it is not those who are called to the ministry alone in whose conversion Christ has a purpose; but, as we have said, the same is true of every one whom He calls into his Church, whatever his position, high or low, conspicuous or obscure. It is a great work which He has performed for every such soul. It means something. There is a divine significance in it. There is that for which he has been apprehended of Christ Jesus. Leaving now the peculiar aims, such as applied to Paul, and to ministers of the gospel, and to all those called to special positions and offices, let us inquire what are the great purposes for which any and every soul is converted.

I. The production, the development, and growth of a Christian character. The change, great, radical, permanent though it be, is not perfect. It is but the birth into a life which is to expand and mature. It is but the blade which is to grow into the stalk and the full corn. It is but the leaven hidden in the three measures of meal, there to work till the whole is leavened. It is but the introduction of a new principle, antagonistic to the old, which is to contend and conquer till the mastery is gained. In fine, great and glorious and all-important as conversion is, it is but the beginning of a work destined to an

indefinite progress. The work done in the soul, if genuine, is but a pledge and prophecy of what is to be done. Now Christ, in the conversion of a soul, does purpose this growth and purification of character. The command to every one as he stands at the very entrance of the new life, — a command repeated at every step of his advance, — is, “Grow in grace. Go forward.” Paul had been many years a Christian, a whole-souled, great-hearted, earnest Christian, when he wrote this letter to the church at Philippi. And yet here, after incredible toils and sufferings, and glorious achievements, he says, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Glowing, inspiring picture of a true Christian life! Grand utterance of a soul intent on accomplishing the purpose of its conversion. And for the humblest, most hidden disciple, who has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus, there is the same high standard, — room for the same aspirations. And how gloriously has this purpose of conversion been realized in the humble walk and the lowly lives of many of God’s children. They have developed a piety and consecration, which, in more conspicuous walks, would have given their names the highest place on the roll of the worthies of the Church. Their light, if it has not shone far and wide, as from some eminence, has shone with a pure and brilliant light over the limited sphere to which its beams extended. Small in dimensions the mirror may have been, but it has reflected, in true and beautiful proportions, the image of Christ.

In huts of poverty, in the cabins of poor bondmen, on fields of exhausting toil, these characters have grown and matured, and brought glory to God. They have there striven to apprehend that for which they were apprehended of Christ Jesus.

O, Christian brother, there needs to be with most of us a revision of our views of conversion, its nature and purpose. Is it merely the birth in the soul of a hope of heaven? Is it merely the lifting of a soul out of darkness, and despondency, and distressing fear, into light, and hope, and felt security? Is it a work done, completed, in which the soul has only to rejoice? One fears that with many this is the idea. We hear of persons who "have got" religion, as though it was something put into a man, — a foreign substance safely lodged in his soul, — and all he had to do was to go forward bearing the precious deposit with him to the judgment throne. We hear of others that they have experienced religion, as though it were an experience to be had once for all, and then to be done with it thenceforward. The renewed soul has experienced conversion, but it has only begun to experience religion. Paul experienced conversion on the road to Damascus, but it was many years afterward, years of toil and conflict, of success and failure, of victory and defeat, when his feet were pressing the threshold of his final home, that he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course." Then he had experienced religion. Then, with his expanded and purified and strengthened Christian character, he had, indeed, apprehended one thing for which he had been apprehended of Christ Jesus. He had grown up into the fulness of the stature of Christian manhood. Now,

Christian brother, are you growing toward this? Is it distinctly before you, as one purpose of Christ in your conversion, that you should thus develop a Christian manhood? Or has your whole thought of conversion begun and ended here, — that it is a change necessary to final salvation? If so, you have solemn need to consider; for we have no evidence that Christ ever converts a soul for that end alone, — nay, we have the strongest evidence that He does not. His design is to purify unto himself a peculiar people.

II. But another purpose in the soul's conversion is to add another to the laborers for Christ, or another soldier to the ranks of that army of which He is captain. Consider Christ the master and owner of a vineyard. Then the hour of a soul's conversion is the hour of its introduction to that vineyard as a laborer. Or consider Christ as the captain of a vast army, marshalling his forces, and leading them forth to the conquest of the world, then the hour of a man's conversion is the hour of his enlistment in that army. In either supposition it is the hour of entering on vigorous and continued service. There is work to be done. There are battles to be fought. The Lord's vineyard is no place for idlers. He calls none into the ranks of his army to be supernumeraries, to be off duty. The idea of a Christian life, the true idea, is that of active service. Go work, is the command which falls direct from the Master on the new-born soul. Go work, is the command which meets him with every new day of his subsequent course. The world cries out for true, honest, earnest Christian labor. Our good brother, the Bethel preacher of Boston, so recently called home, and

whose loss is so widely and deeply mourned, over whose coffin so many tearful countenances bent, was emphatically a worker. He fell a martyr to his untempered zeal in doing good. Exhausting toil by day brought him to a night not of repose, but of restless wakefulness, and this at length brought him to that state in which reason became clouded, and, finally, to death. But, just before he ceased to breathe, looking earnestly into the face of the doctor, who stood by his side, he said, "Doctor, I have a mighty work to do." They were his last words, — fitting close of such a life. This had been, from the hour of his conversion, the feeling under which he had lived, — I have a mighty work to do. And he has done a mighty work, and now rests from his labors. But this should be the feeling of every disciple, be he minister or layman, high or low, "I have a mighty work to do." For this end he has been converted. He was apprehended of Christ Jesus for this very purpose. He is continued on earth to this end. And can one be a Christian, — I ask it solemnly, personally, — can one be a Christian who, in such a world as this, feels no obligation to direct, personal labor for Christ? O, brethren, is it only here and there one, a mere fraction of the Church, who are converted to be laborers for Christ? Is it true that all the rest have received a discharge from the Master, and are released from the obligation? No, it is not true. Labor is the consequence and the test of conversion. Christ converts men to this end.

III. But, finally, men are converted that they may be saved, eternally saved. It is the turning-point, conversion is, in the soul's destiny. It is the starting-point in the soul's preparation for heaven, which is

to be carried forward till it becomes meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is taking the feet of a traveller to eternity out of the broad way whose end is destruction, and putting them down in the narrow way, whose end is everlasting life. The ultimate purpose in every conversion is the salvation of a soul. Jesus graciously lays hold on the soul that He may save it from death. This thought is graciously brought out in the closing words of this third chapter of Philippians, For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto himself. A citizenship in heaven! Such Paul felt that he had. For a season away from home, a dweller in a foreign land, but on his way to the city of his final abode. He already had a citizenship there, and was only waiting the summons to depart thither.

Here, then, are the three objects of the soul's conversion. For these purposes it is that it is apprehended of Christ Jesus, that it may develop Christian character, that it may enter into active and life-long service for Christ, and that it may be saved in heaven. All these purposes were accomplished in the conversion of Paul. He did develop a noble Christian manhood, he did labor with untiring zeal for Christ, and he is, beyond all doubt, now in heaven. When he wrote my text he had not attained, but now he has attained. When he wrote my text he counted not himself to have apprehended, but now he has apprehended. And now he is enjoying the full fruition of the purpose for which, so many centuries ago,

he was converted, changed from the blaspheming, persecuting Saul to the devout and earnest Apostle Paul.

His example is before us, brethren. His words coming down through the centuries still strike on our ears, Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. We cannot all be Pauls. The world has seen but one, and will never see another. But, however humble our abilities or limited our sphere, we can strive to imitate him, placing before ourselves the same aims, and reaching forth after the same prize. Was Paul deemed a fanatic, a visionary, a madman? We know that he was. Once, in the midst of a most impassioned discourse, he was interrupted with the charge of madness. But calmly he replied, "I am not mad, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." He was a singular man, but not mad. He who should now attempt to imitate him would be singular, but not mad. Nay, it is a course of living dictated by the highest reason, as well as by the purest revelation. The aims of scholar, statesman, merchant, what are they compared with the aims of the true, living follower of Christ?

CONSCIOUS WEAKNESS AND REAL STRENGTH.

When I am weak, then am I strong. — 2 Cor. xii. 10.

THE whole verse reads thus: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." A singular catalogue. Were these sources of pleasure? Can this testimony be true? Did Paul realize what he wrote? Did he really find pleasure in these hard and trying and cruel experiences, in what would have been to ordinary persons causes of the greatest misery. If he had said he submitted to them, bore them patiently, that would have been saying much. Unmurmuring submission to the dark and severe experiences of life is a high Christian attainment. But we can understand it. But, more than this, a great deal more than this is here asserted: "I take pleasure in them. They yield me happiness." But why? Not for their own sakes. Not because he coveted suffering in itself. There have been wild and misguided fanatics who have courted persecution, and sought martyrdom as in itself a blessing and a privilege. Paul was no such fanatic. But when in the path of duty, and for the sake of the Master, suffering came, whatever its form or

degree, he found pleasure in it. And why? the question returns. My text is the answer. "For when I am weak, then am I strong." Experience had taught him this great and glorious lesson, that whatever diminished his own strength, whether bodily infirmities, or the reproaches of men, or poverty, or painful inflictions, at the same time clothed him with a strength not his own, — a higher, nobler might. "Most gladly, therefore," says he, "will I glory in my infirmities." Why? Because infirmities were, in themselves, a good? By no means. But "that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

My text is what rhetoricians call a paradox; that is, an expression which contains a seeming contradiction, but which is, nevertheless, true in fact. You are at first startled by such expressions, and feel that they are absurd, or at variance with common sense, and afterwards find a special pleasure in discovering their truth. But was this paradox, this seemingly contradictory assertion, applicable to Paul alone? Could he say it of himself, in a sense in which no other man could say it of himself? I think not. It is the utterance of a general truth, illustrations of which may be found in all departments of life, but especially in the realm of the spiritual. When I am weak, then am I strong, — conscious weakness is the condition of real strength. And, —

I. Mark it as true of the beginning of personal piety. I take the history of a single soul in the process of the great change. Here is one who has been living a score or scores of years, self-satisfied, undisturbed by any religious anxieties. His life has been fair, upright, honorable. He has had a respect for religion and its institutions, but as a personal matter

he has given it no thought. But now, for some reason, by the providence of God, or by some pungent sermon, or by a more than usual interest in the community, he is awakened to a sense of personal need. He feels a solicitude which he cannot easily shake off. Honorable as his life has been in the eyes of men, and in his own eyes, he is now convinced that it has not been what it should be, — it will not bear the test of the divine scrutiny. He must begin a new life. He will do it. Resolutions are formed, and the attempt made to reduce them to practice. He is determined to change himself and become a new man. With many conscious failures and shortcomings, the attempt is continued. He is sometimes disheartened, still he perseveres. But at length, after long effort, he wakes to the consciousness that with all his resolutions and all his doings, he is essentially the same man that he was. He searches for the tests of true discipleship as they are given in the Scriptures, but he cannot find them in himself. Tried by the strict law of God, he is condemned. But what can he do? Be more vigilant, more earnest, more constant in his endeavors? If all his doings have resulted in nothing thus far, what hope is there that they will effect anything in the future? Why continue them? I can do no more, he says. I have done nothing. I can do nothing. I am powerless. I am lost. But though he does not know it, it is in that very weakness that his strength lies. He is in the very condition where the power of Christ may rest upon him. And looking up from his prone and helpless and despairing state, he beholds Him who is mighty to save and by faith lays hold on the outstretched arm of his omnipotence. And now in a strength not his own

he rises to a new life. It is not resolutions, nor efforts, but Christ in him that is the source of his strength. He is strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. I have given the process by which many souls have been led to the first possession of spiritual strength. It is after all other means have been tried, after their own efforts and doings have been exhausted, that they have found the needed strength, where only it could be found. The process in all cases may not be the same, but in every case there must be a conviction of helplessness before the experience of help,—conscious weakness must precede conscious strength. It is said that the celebrated Whitefield had a brother who was irreligious and reckless. From this state he was aroused under a sermon by his brother in Lady Huntingdon's chapel, Bath; but it was only to sink into a despondency, bordering on absolute despair. One evening he was taking tea with Lady Huntingdon, and she was endeavoring to inspire him with hope by presenting the all-sufficiency of the grace which is in Christ Jesus. "My lady," he replied, "I know what you say is true. The mercy of God is infinite; I see it clearly. But ah! my lady, there is no mercy for me. I am lost, entirely lost." "I am glad to hear it," said Lady Huntingdon, "glad at my heart that you are a lost man." With surprise, he said, "What! glad, glad at heart that I am lost?" "Yes, truly, Mr. Whitefield, truly glad, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save the lost!" It was the word in season. That despondency, despair, utter weakness was just what he needed to make Christ welcome, and to fit him to be clothed with his strength. And this is just the experience which every soul needs, must have, ere it

receives strength from God. Take Paul's own conversion. He had been living a proud, self-reliant, self-sufficient life, strong in his resolutions and strong in his activities, never doubting that he was the favorite of Heaven, and doing God service. The thought of inability was one he was a stranger to. He was equal to any demand that should be made on him, fired at all times with a quenchless zeal. Thus he was up to the hour when God met him. But what was the first work of the divine power on this haughty man? To cast him to the ground, prone and helpless and blind, to strip him of every semblance of strength, and to change his entire consciousness of himself, so that instead of regarding himself as a model of righteousness, he saw himself to be the very chief of sinners, the guiltiest of the guilty. The work was instantaneous; but it was thorough, entire, and out of that prostration, perfect helplessness, he passed into a new life, a life of conscious power, but not his own, a life in which he could say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He had been perfect weakness all his life, though he never knew it till the hour when God revealed it to him as he lay there on the road to Damascus. And in that revelation was the beginning of his strength.

The Psalmist says, "I was brought low and He helped me." And in this he has stated the process of God's work on the souls of men. He casts down that He may lift up. He wounds that He may heal. He slays that He may make alive. There are diseases of the human body that the skilful physician sees can be cured, if at all, only by reducing the system to the lowest point of vitality, and then raising it up. To the unpractised observer the process may

seem hazardous in the extreme, and as day after day the strength wanes, and the pulse becomes more languid, he predicts that death must ensue. But at the right moment when the disease has lost its hold, because there is nothing to feed it, the restorative remedies are applied, and a new and healthier vitality follows. There is a volume of spiritual meaning in that saying of our Lord, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The great hindrance to conversion everywhere is that souls do not know their need. They are whole in their own esteem. They will not see the evidences, however conclusive, of their own utter helplessness.

And here, in passing let me say, we may see the use of that opposed and hated doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty. We read the Epistle to the Romans till we come to the ninth chapter, and that seems forbidding, awful. We read, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." And we say that is a hard, a terrible doctrine, and we are ready to adopt the very language which the Apostle puts upon the lips of a caviller, and say, Such being the case, why doth God yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? But after all the glosses, and explanations, and ingenious reasonings, there this chapter stands uttering the same testimony, proclaiming the same doctrine that it has for more than eighteen centuries. We must either deny that it was written by inspiration, or we must receive it as God's truth. But says one, If it be true, of what possible use can it be? Why preach it? If it is true, that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy, what can be the effect but to dis-

courage, and dishearten, and induce a feeling of utter helplessness to proclaim this? Well, my hearers, suppose this is the effect. And it must be admitted that this is the tendency. May it not be that that is the very effect which God wishes and designs to produce? May not this feeling of utter prostration, entire helplessness, be the very one in which He chooses to place the sinner before Him,— that thus He may meet him with his own almighty grace? May not that be the very state into which he must come that the power of Christ may rest upon him? I have met with many persons in my ministry who were making a shield of this doctrine to ward off all the arrows of truth, and who were ready for an argument on the subject. Riding many years ago with a young lawyer whom I had known from childhood, I embraced the opportunity to urge on him the claims of the religion of Christ. He admitted its importance, for he had been religiously trained, but immediately added, "It is not of him that willeth, for He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy." There he had planted himself, and no arguments of mine were of any avail. And he is living to-day, probably standing just where he did then. Did he in his inmost soul believe the doctrine which he thus lightly quoted? Was it one of his settled convictions, or was it a mere attempt to shift the blame of his irreligiousness from himself to God? He did not believe it. He could not have thus lightly treated it had he really in his heart believed it. But should I not dread and deprecate the influence of this doctrine on the hearts of my people? I should dread a mere speculative, argumentative treatment of it. I should dread the attempt to divest it of all mystery, and to

bring it into clearly understood harmony with other Scriptural teachings. But I should rejoice to see ten, twenty, a hundred, any number of my hearers spiritually prostrate before a sovereign God, feeling that they are lost, and that if saved it must be by no righteousness or works of their own, but by the free grace of God. I should rejoice, because I should then know they were in the very place where God's help would meet them. When they were thus weak, they would receive strength. Christ stands ready to enter into any soul that is thus emptied of self. But, —

II. If the beginning of a religious life thus illustrates the truth of my text, so does its growth and progress in the individual soul. We sometimes hear the petition, and sometimes I trust offer it, for a deeper work of grace in our hearts. I do not think we often realize what would be the answer, or the effects of the answer of such a petition. Perhaps we are thinking only of a more excited and joyful state into which we desire to pass. Perhaps we have no very definite conceptions of what we are asking for. But we have seen that a work of grace in the heart begins in emptying it of self, in a feeling of helplessness, in casting down all false confidences. And what should a deepening of that work be, but a deepening of this prostration and helplessness? Growth in grace is a blessed thing, if it be real, and it is real when it carries us out of ourselves into Christ, when it sinks us lower and raises Him higher, when it makes us feel that we are nothing, and that He is all and in all. It was not to the unbelieving world, irreligious and careless, but to his own disciples, his chosen twelve, who had believed on Him, and had been with him during his earthly ministry, that He

said, "Without me ye can do nothing." It was in his farewell discourse, when He was on the eve of his departure, that He said this ; and why did He say it ? That He might destroy all self-confidence in them. And why were these words recorded and handed down to us ? That they might teach every believer to the end of time that in himself he is powerless. "Without me ye can do nothing." How much life, growth, fruitage would there be in a branch separated from the vine ? But I, said Jesus, am the vine, ye are the branches ; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. Talents, learning, zeal, animation, — these are all valuable, when the soul is abiding in Christ, and these are employed in his service and in dependence on Him. But many, many times has God schooled some true and earnest laborer for Him, by a most painful discipline, into the lesson that he was nothing ; that he could do nothing, that he was weakness itself without Him. The hour of triumph has followed hard on the hour of absolute despondency. When all means have been exhausted and have proved unavailing, and the tried laborer has said, I can do no more, then the great Helper has come, and mighty results have followed. That is a remarkable scene in the life of Jacob, where one in the form of a man wrestled with him till the break of day, in the place which he afterwards called Peniel. I do not profess to understand it fully. But there is one lesson apparent on the surface. During the long hours of that night the mysterious being wrestled with him. And Jacob was left alone ; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. There was no victory yet. And now He who

wrestled with the patriarch touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of his thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. Surely you would say this is the hour of Jacob's defeat, for what could a wrestler do with his thigh dislocated? But not so. It was the hour of his victory. It was the hour when his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. And He said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." He was in God's hands, maimed and helpless, unable longer to wrestle, but still clinging, saying, "I will not let thee go," and then he prevailed. He then learned the same lesson which Paul so many centuries afterwards learned, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Christ cannot put his seal, the seal of his approval, on nature's strength, or wisdom, or glory; all these must sink that He may rise. He will carry forward his kingdom so as to reserve the glory of all true achievement to himself. For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence. You wish, Christian friend, to do something for God. You feel the obligation of duty, of gratitude, of love for the Master to attempt something in his service. You feel that somewhere, somehow your influence ought to be felt. Would you know the condition of success? It is here in the feeling of your utter weakness. There is no disciple of Christ so destitute of talents, or learning, or wealth, or other ordinary

sources of influence, who, if he should go forth in humble dependence on Christ, might not be a power in the Church. And so, too, in meeting the temptations of life, so numerous, and some of them so mighty, the Christian's safety is in his conscious weakness. There is little danger while he feels this. Speaking a few days since with a Christian brother of the sad wrecks of professed Christian character, of some who had fallen, whom we had both known, he said, "I tremble when I think of them ; I tremble for myself lest I too may fall." I did not say it, but I thought as I turned away from him, "Your very safety, my brother, is in that feeling." Those who fall are not those who feel their weakness, and tremble in view of their exposure, and cling by faith to One mightier than themselves ; but those who are confident in their own strength, and rush forth amidst the temptations of life without a fear. The superintendent of one of the asylums for inebriates said years of observation had taught him this. When one who had been restored left the asylum, confident that he should never fall again, certain that no temptation would ever conquer him, he expected in a few days or weeks to receive him back again. His assurance was his weakness. But when one left with many misgivings and fears, making no resolutions, but humbly hoping he might be kept, he was confident he would stand. His very weakness was his strength. We are weak, my brethren. Resolutions are good, and so is watchfulness, and so are the precautions and guards by which we can surround ourselves. But with them all we are weak. We are not made to keep ourselves. And our safety is in the thorough conviction of this. Blessed and safe is he who can

sing that beautiful one hundred and twenty-first Psalm, making it his own: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber." There is safety there, strength there.

III. Once more, this truth is illustrated in the whole history of the Church and in all her great enterprises. In her weakness has been her strength. What was the Church when her Lord was crucified? What was her promise when He left her? The promise of a tiny plant exposed to the tread of an elephant. Embracing only a few hundreds of disciples, without wealth, without learning, without political influence, the object of scorn to the Gentiles, and of bitter hatred to the Jews, who could predict anything but its speedy extinction? Weak, defenceless, hopeless, it seemed. And yet what a record of almost ceaseless and rapid triumph is that contained in the Acts of the Apostles, covering a period of only thirty years! And how shall we account for it? Only, I contend, by referring to the power of God. Her weakness was her strength, because it drove her to the source of all might, and his strength was made perfect in her weakness. A few humble followers having seen the ascension of their Lord, went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them. When modern missions began in the labors and contributions of that little company to whom belonged William Cary, Andrew Fuller, and Samuel Pearce, how absurd, almost insane, seemed the undertaking! It is no wonder that the wits of the time made themselves merry over their speeches and plans and con-

tributions, ludicrously contrasting the means with the ends contemplated. But their weakness was their strength. They could not walk by sight, for there was nothing to be seen, and they did therefore walk by faith. But the result is known, and has passed into history. And thus of other great enterprises in the history of the Church, they have illustrated the truth that when she was weak then was she strong, then did the power of Christ rest upon her.

My subject thus illustrated yields encouragement and instruction.

There are in nearly every Christian congregation persons who say they have long wished they were Christians, and have many times striven to become Christians, and that they seem to have made no real progress, and are wellnigh discouraged. If I am speaking to one such, let me say, if you were wholly discouraged and were ready to fall this day, this hour, helpless and lost into the arms of an Almighty Saviour, it were better still. It is to that very discouragement, that conviction of utter powerlessness, that you need to come. What must we do, said certain Jews to Christ, that we may work the works of God? And what was the answer? This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. And this is the answer now, not doing, but believing, trusting, yielding yourself to be saved. I see one hanging over a fearful precipice. Beneath his feet is yielding sand. Above his head is the slenderest twig to which he is clinging. But beneath him stands one of giant strength who says "Let go your hold and drop into my arms." And now the sooner, from the conviction of utter helplessness, he does that the better. His safety, his salvation, is in his weakness.

And, Christian disciple, longing to be useful, but discouraged by a feeling of inability, ready to say "if only I had the talents, or the learning, or the resources that I could bring to the cause how gladly would I bring them." Bring your weakness, your inefficiency, remembering Him who has said, My strength is made perfect in weakness. It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. He who wrote my text had natural and acquired ability, rarely if ever equalled, yet it was in his infirmities, his weaknesses, that he gloried, that the power of Christ might rest on him.

And finally we may gather assurance of the ultimate triumph of Christ's kingdom. With what an air of disdain and triumph do the skepticism and infidelity of our time look down on the Christian cause! How boastfully do they boast that the scholarship and science of the world are with them! And does the believer, looking at the array of forces, all marshalled against the one cause, sometimes tremble? Why, Christian friend, the forces on which this cause depends are unseen, but they are almighty. You remember the scene recorded in the life of Elisha when he was in Dothan. During the night the king of Syria had compassed the city with an immense army, horses and chariots and a great host, determined to take the prophet. And early in the morning the servant of Elisha rose and went forth and saw the little city in which they were thus encompassed on every side by the Syrian host. Hastening back to the man of God in dismay he said, Alas, alas, my master, what shall we do? Calmly the prophet replied, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. The servant could not see it.

And Elisha prayed, saying, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw: and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Believe it, Christian, there are invisible hosts, horses, and chariots of fire round about the cause of Christ. They that be for it are more than they that be against it. The final victory is certain. That vision of the seer of Patmos is yet to be realized. "And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: . . . And He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."

“HE WOULD PUT STRENGTH IN ME.”¹

Will He plead against me with his great power? No, but He would put strength in me.—JOB xxiii. 6.

THE Bible is a wonderful book. Evidences of its divine origin grow on the believer with every passing year and every great change in his history. It presents a broad and fair field for scholarship, one on which learning may reap and has reaped rich harvests. We are grateful for these results of patient study; for all that genuine learning and true scholarship have done in unfolding the meanings of the sacred text. But not by scholarship alone have the hidden treasures of the word been found and brought forth. There are meanings which no study and no criticism can evolve. Passages there are which speak directly to the heart, and to the heart in exigencies of its experience; passages to whose profoundest significance only experience can guide us.

The stars that stud the sky as brilliant gems need the darkness of night to bring them out. When the sun has gone down, and the shades of evening deepen, then they come forth from their hidden

¹ Brookline, August 23, 1863. Sabbath morning after the funeral of my dear son.

places; then all eyes behold them. But it is said there are deep wells down which one may descend at noonday, and there, looking up from the deep darkness, he beholds the stars which men above in the bright noonday cannot see. So there are deeps of personal experience down which God leads some child of his, and from which, looking up to the overhanging canopy of Scripture, he sees beauties, and meanings, and brilliant lights, which he never saw before, and which are invisible to other eyes. He has the stand-point which he never occupied before.

And let me tell you I believe there is a word, one word, some one passage for each tried and afflicted disciple, and if he searches for it he shall find it, and when he finds it it will speak to him directly. It will be as though God then and there for the first time uttered the message in his ears. He will feel, "That is mine, intended for me, sent to me." In the first days of my great sorrow, reeling under the stunning blow, I turned over the pages of the blessed Book, but it did not speak to me. Its rich promises, and words of tender sympathy, came not home to me. At length I opened to this twenty-third chapter of the Book of Job, a book familiar to me from childhood, a chapter which I had read a hundred times, and it was all new. My heart was in sympathy with it, and when I came to this verse, I said how strange that it never before arrested my attention! How precious and perfectly adapted its words! "Will He plead against me with his great power? No, but He would put strength in me." *He, the infinite God, would put strength in me.*

Job had been surrounded by his three friends. For days they said nothing—uttered not a word.

But at length they broke the silence, but their words were harsh, accusing words ; they plead against him. They were miserable comforters, opening and deepening the wounds, and giving new anguish to his heart. And here in this chapter Job turns away from them, and sends his thoughts toward God, "Even to-day is my complaint bitter ; my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh ! that I knew where I could find Him," that is, God. "I would come even to his seat. I would order my cause before Him. I would fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words that He would speak. I would understand what He would say unto me." But here, as though the thought occurred to him for the first time, "What if He should do as my human friends have done, accuse and reproach me — what if He should !" And he asks the question, "Will He plead against me with his great power ?" But at once, and with emphasis, his heart replies, "No, He will not do it, but He will put strength into me."

These words were inexpressibly precious to me during those dark days, and I come to you, my beloved friends, this morning, not so much to preach a sermon, as to utter a few of the thoughts which clustered around, or rather which sprang out of this text of Scripture, as I then meditated on it. I shall not apologize, I know I need not, for permitting my own experience to guide me in the service of this morning. I stand amidst my own people, and I am assured of your sympathy, and very precious has this assurance been to me. But to the text, "Will He plead against me with his great power. No, but He would put strength in me."

I. The image which the text calls up is that of a

traveller, foot-sore and weary, and ready to faint, dragging himself along a rugged pathway, beneath a scorching sun. A heavy burden presses on him, and almost crushes him to the earth. He feels that he must sink and lie down in utter prostration.

Now there are two ways in which one having the power could bring relief to this weary and fainting one. The first, most obvious, and simple way would be to lift the burden from him. This would be the human way. But the other, sublimer, diviner method, would be to impart the strength to bear it. To stand by the exhausted man and breathe into him new vitality, giving new energy to every limb, causing him to stand erect under his load, and to walk forth with the elasticity and vigor of youth, exulting even to bear the burden. If the first method is human, the second is divine. Only the Maker of the body could thus reinvigorate it.

When Christ was on earth, to make his power manifest and show forth his glory, He sometimes adopted the first method. He grasped the burden and lifted it off. You remember that beautiful narrative of the scene just without the little city of Nain. He and his disciples were approaching the gate of the city, when they were met by a funeral procession. It was that of a young man, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. How the whole scene comes before you in the few words of the narrative. The bier, the bearers, the bowed and weeping widowed mother, the few friends that have gathered around her in her sorrow, and are making up this sad procession. With the tenderest compassion Jesus looks on, He steps to the side of the bereaved and desolate mother, He whispers in her ear, Weep not,

and then, touching the bier, says, Young man, arise, With his own hand He gives him back, restored to life and to the embraces of his mother. He had lifted the burden from that crushed and fainting woman. With a light step and a lighter heart she goes home, to a home dearer than ever.

Again, you recall the scene at the portal of the tomb of Lazarus, whom, with his sisters, Jesus loved. He stands there—the divine waiting on the human—and weeps: the Man weeps for what the God will presently restore. But here, too, to reveal his power over death and the grave, He just grasps the burden with the might of omnipotence and lifts it off from the sorrowing sisters. Standing at the opened tomb, He said, Lazarus, come forth; and he came forth, returning with his now rejoicing sisters to their home.

Thus Christ brought relief to stricken and sorrowing ones when on earth. And thus He could do now, for all power in heaven and on earth is his. But thus He does not do. He stops no procession to the grave now to call the dead to life; He stands by the portal of no tomb to summon the sleeper to come forth. But He does more,—aye, the greater; the sublimer work. By the portal of every tomb where one of his disciples stands weeping, He stands, really, though invisibly present, silently imparting strength, nerving and bracing the burdened and fainting soul with an energy not its own. Oh, it is, it is a diviner work, to enable the soul to turn from the grave, without murmuring, leaving its treasure there, than to give back the treasure again. It is a mightier power that can say to the stricken and sorrowing one, Weep not, while the cause of weeping

remains, than to say, Weep not, when the cause is removed. It is more godlike to give the strength to bear the burden than it is to lift the burden off. Will He plead against me with his great power? No, no, he will not. But He will put strength into me.

II. How does He do this? How does He put strength into the soul?

1. He may do it immediately, by an act like that of a first creation. All the avenues to the soul are known by Him, and open to Him, for He made it. And we would not limit Him. In ways unknown, mysterious, incomprehensible to us, the Infinite Spirit may bring itself into contact with the finite and human spirit. There are passages of Scripture bearing on this, down into whose depths we gaze, but whose meaning we cannot fathom: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And in the farewell prayer of Jesus, how sublimely mysterious the words, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and Thou in me." And then, again, in the vision of John in Patmos: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me." I know how these and kindred passages are explained, and it is partially true, that God abides with his children by the indwelling of his truth; that Jesus comes in and sups with the soul by the memory of his life, his words, and his deeds. All this is true. But is it the whole truth? Do we not feel that there may be, there is, expressed in

these passages a union more real, immediate, personal than the ordinary interpretations given to them imply? We will come unto him and make our abode with him. I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me. I in them, and Thou in me. We will not define them. We will not attempt it; but leave the matter here, only drawing the intimation of a mysterious, undefinable, personal union between the soul and its Maker. And may it not be that through this He puts strength into the weak and weary soul? That it is by his own mysterious indwelling that might is imparted to the fainting, — a union in some way between perfect weakness and infinite strength?

2. But, leaving this mystery, there are methods, perfectly intelligible, by which God puts strength into the soul that is heavy laden. There are revelations of himself and of his truth, through which, as means, divine strength is imparted.

(1.) And first, the doctrine of a minute and universal providence is a most sustaining and strengthening truth. Get it thoroughly into the soul, and it wonderfully strengthens it. I know we all profess to believe it. It is a part of the creed of Christendom that God reigns over all, and everywhere. We accept the words of Jesus as literally true: Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the notice of your Father which is in heaven, and by Him are the very hairs of your heads numbered. We have no difficulty in admitting this in the day of prosperity, when the thoughts are calm and the feelings unruffled. But I appeal to every afflicted one, every one on whom some crushing blow has suddenly fallen, for the testimony, that then, when the heart is bleeding, and the

eyes are blinded with tears, if it be not hard to see God's hand in the event. The thoughts then wander about, and we lose ourselves in a labyrinth of second causes. We go over and over again the incidents, and say, Oh! if this or that had not been, or if I had used this or that precaution, the blow might have been averted. You know, afflicted ones, it was thus with you. And it is a terrible aggravation of the affliction which comes from this source. Only harrowing regrets and bitter self-reproaches are started. There is no resting-place for the soul here. But when God draws near, takes the thoughts off and away from all these earthly causes, and reveals himself, the infinitely wise and the infinitely good, as the great First Cause, moving in and controlling all the incidents of your affliction, making each one a step in the progress toward the terrible catastrophe, bringing it about just when and as He purposed, that it was no accident, no chance event, but one perfectly, and in all its antecedents, foreseen and ordered by Him, then the heart rests here. It bows in submission to Him who had the right to do according to his own pleasure. It reposes on the assurance that the Lord hath done it, and is refreshed. Strength to endure comes just in proportion to the faith in this assurance. And thus God puts strength in me by showing me that He himself has laid the burden on me with his own hand.

(2.) But strength comes again from the assurance of divine sympathy. Human sympathy is precious. You love to sit down by one whose heart is open to yours, and who can enter into your sorrows. But there is a grief that human sympathy cannot reach: it is too deep, too hidden for that. It craves some-

thing more, and it can have it. The paternal sympathy of God is ours. Like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust. Precious assurances, full of consolation and strength, that there is an infinite heart that throbs with sympathy for the poor, weak, sorrowing disciple, such sympathy in kind, but infinitely surpassing it in degree, as a father feels for his suffering child. Blessed Bible that brings us this assurance. But it is to God in Christ, the God man, that we specially turn for the realization of this sympathy. He, our great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens, is one who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; for He has been tried in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He knows what sore temptations mean, for He has felt the same. He himself drank of every bitter cup of which his disciple is called to drink, and how rich are the promises of his divine presence and succor. Fear not, for I am with you. I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you. My grace is sufficient for you, for my grace is made perfect in weakness. It was the heroic, but tried and persecuted Paul, who could say, When I am weak then am I strong. Yea, I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. Ah! it needs the experience of weakness, of utter prostration, to draw forth and make real the strength of Christ. I was brought low, and He helped me.

(3.) Again, strength comes from the perception of the design of our afflictions. Now no chastisement for the present is joyous but grievous, nevertheless it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteous-

ness in them that are exercised therewith. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye be without chastisement then are ye not sons. We can bear any pain, any bereavement, if we know it is sent in love, designed and adapted for our good. We go willingly into the furnace, we sit there patiently, if we know it is only to purify us, burn up our dross. A few verses on from my text, Job says, "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." There is a glorious process going forward on the soul in the midnight of its affliction. Somewhere in the literature for the afflicted which I have turned over I have met with an illustration like the following: High up on a mountain is a quarry of marble. Some day the workman selects his position, and begins by heavy blows to sever his block. At each blow the marble that has been for ages at rest, says, What does this mean? But, by and by, wrenched and separated from its place, the block goes thundering down the mountain-side, and at each bound it says, And what does this mean? In the vale beneath the artist takes it, and begins to chisel it, striking off chip after chip, and still again says the marble, What can this mean? But at length the work is completed. An angel form, of spotless whiteness and heavenly beauty, has come forth from the rough block, and is removed to take its place in a gallery of statues, the joy of the artist and the admiration of beholders. Ah! says the marble, This is what it means. It is all clear now. So does the Infinite Artist, by heavy blows, wrench the soul from its quiet resting-place, cast it down, chisel it, and shape it, and, by and by, purified and made white, in the home above, it will look back

and say, "Ah! this is what it means. The mystery is solved. It is all clear now. I see it."

(4.) And, finally, strength comes from the vision of a better world beyond. It is but a step across the dark stream. On the other shore no sorrow comes. All tears are wiped away. In one of the many beautiful notes of sympathy which have come to me in these dark days there is this expression: In the better land there will be no telegrams to awaken painful grief. They never come there. It is but a little way to that home. And when we reach it there will be no night there, no night of sin, no night of bereavement, no night of sorrow, no night of death. Blessed, strengthening thought.

But enough. In these and other ways, through these and other blessed truths, He, the Infinite God, puts strength into the weak and sorrowing soul.

And now, my hearer, suffer the appeal. Are you a Christian? Know you God and Christ and the blessed Scriptures by a personal experience? In prosperity, before the death-angel has entered and darkened your home, you may feel that you do not need the supports and consolations of religion. It is a mistake. You do need them. But the day of trouble will come. However long and bright the day, the night cometh, and what will you do then, with no God and no Saviour? "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

And one word to Christians. You need to be laying, in daily experience, a reserved force, a

spiritual power. The nearer you live to God the more intimate and real and spiritual your communion with Him, the more readily can you run unto Him, the nearer will He be to you in the day of your calamity. The avenues of the soul must be kept open to God, not clogged by worldliness and sensuality, if we would have Him come in with strength and solace in the times of our distress and need. Oh! may we all so live that when we are bowed down, stricken, overwhelmed, feeling that we must sink down in utter helplessness, we may, like Job, look up to the Infinite One and say, He, He would put strength in me.

IMAGINARY DIFFICULTIES.¹

And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.—MARK xvi. 3, 4.

THE scene here recorded is taken from the narrative of a visit which three women made to the grave of their crucified Redeemer. They were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome. It was on the morning of the first day of the week after the crucifixion. Our Lord was crucified on our Friday. But the Jewish Sabbath, corresponding to our Saturday, followed the day of the crucifixion; on that day, therefore, conscientiously scrupulous, they rested, and, much as we may suppose they desired it, refrained from visiting the grave of their Lord till the Sabbath was fully past. But the early dawn of the following day saw them going forth from the city, and directing their steps toward the garden in which was the tomb where their Redeemer was laid, bearing with them sweet spices with which to anoint his body. These three women, standing afar off, had beheld the crucifixion, and two of them, the two Marys, had beheld his burial.

¹ June 11, 1859.

It is a simple record which is here given — calm, unimpassioned — of this visit to the sepulchre. And yet if we will endeavor to recall the scene, make it a reality, we shall find in it the proofs not only of an ardent love for Christ, but of a singular heroism. It was in the “dim twilight of an eastern daybreak,” an hour when it must have tried the courage of any three women to go forth alone to enter any tomb. But whose tomb was it which these women went forth to visit, and to enter? That of one who had just been tried and condemned and crucified as a malefactor; of one who had been pronounced a criminal, and as such sentenced to an ignominious death. There might have been, I think, a very strong affection for Christ, and yet the want of that courage which would enable these women to go forth alone on such an errand at such an hour. But within the breasts of these three there was the boldness; they had the affection; and no superstitious fears, no shrinking from the darkness and loneliness of the tomb or from the ghastliness of death, and no dread of public censure could restrain them from manifesting it. He had been judged worthy of death. But they believed Him worthy of the strongest love and highest honor, and in the face of the sternest public sentiment they were ready to manifest that conviction. It was a slight act which they purposed, an act which could do the crucified One no good, to anoint — not to embalm, as has by some been supposed, which was not a Jewish custom, and which was a difficult process, the work of physicians and not of women; but simply to anoint the unconscious body. Yes, it was a simple act, and one which could do the lifeless body no good; and yet there was a worth in it, in the purpose, which

no language can express. As an expression of love for Christ, how beautiful! It was like the love which the mother shows to her darling child when she strews its little grave with fresh flowers, or tenderly hangs upon the headstone the wreath so carefully wrought. An act in itself valueless, but for its expression touching and beautiful. Such was the visit and the errand of these women, at that early morning hour, to the sepulchre of their Redeemer.

And as they went they conversed, as did the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, conversed no doubt of Him whose grave they were visiting. The beauty of his life, the patience of his death, and the cruelties which He had endured, or perhaps some remembered saying of his, some precious promise, or some petition, formed the theme of remark. And now they have almost reached the sepulchre, when it occurs to one of the Marys who had seen Him committed to the tomb that a very large stone was placed at the mouth of the cave. And at once it seems to them they shall be defeated in the object of their errand. It will be impossible for them to effect an entrance, and all their preparation, their costly spices, their long walk will be in vain. For who, they said among themselves, who shall roll us away the stone from the door. Surely they could not do it, for they had seen the utmost strength of strong men employed to place it there, and they could not hope to find men there who with sympathy for their errand would aid them. What, then, should they do? And yet with all their fears, and with the seeming impossibility of accomplishing their purpose, they press forward, until looking up they saw that the stone was rolled away. By whom and how it was rolled away

we know, for Matthew says, "And behold there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." And when they saw this, with glad hearts they hastened forward.

The theme which the incident naturally suggests is this: *Our anticipated trials and difficulties often disappear as we approach them.*

I. There is no life here free from trial. It is through much tribulation that the most favored of God's people make their way home to the final rest, and every tribulation, every pain and pang of grief has its purpose to fulfil. God has wisely ordered them all. But in addition to the real burdens and griefs which God sees we need, and in mercy and in wisdom sends, there are a multitude which have no existence except in our fears, anticipated troubles which never come—huge stones lying in our imagination directly in our path—but which, when approached, are found rolled away. We differ, by natural or acquired temperament, in regard to this anticipation of evil, I have no doubt, some being more and some less given to forebodings. But if we should, any of us, look back and see how much of the trial, how many of the burdens of the past have been borrowed, and only borrowed, awakening unnecessary anxieties and fears, we should be surprised. And to many the greater portion and the heaviest of the troubles of life have been wholly of this character; spectres which a vivid imagination has originated in the path before us, like the ghosts which the fears of our childhood created out of each shadow, or bush, or stump of a tree when walking some lonesome way by night. I wish to illustrate this disposition to borrow trouble and to show its folly and wickedness.

1. We see it in the fears with which many burden themselves in regard to their temporal condition. There are multitudes who are always foreboding evil. The sun shines clearly and the breeze is gentle and favoring to-day, but then, — but then, who knows how soon some little speck in the sky may spread and gather blackness and send forth the fierce wind and the driving 'storm by which we shall be wrecked.

We see a common and familiar illustration of this spirit in the prognostics which are every year put forth in regard to the seasons.¹ The laws which control the atmospheric changes are the least understood of any of the natural laws. An eclipse of the sun or the moon, or the return of the blazing comet, may be exactly foretold for years or centuries beforehand. The astronomer has the data, by which, in the retirement of his study, he can make his calculations with the utmost certainty. But what will be the atmospheric changes for a week to come, or for the next twenty-four hours, neither the philosopher nor the peasant has the means of predicting. The laws which govern these are hidden, and their workings little understood. Hence there is the widest field here for conjecture and foreboding, and every year since our remembrance we have heard the prediction of drought or flood or frost, by which the hopes of husbandmen were to be cut off, and the suffering consequent upon stunted crops was to be experienced. A week of unusual heat and dryness at the opening of the last month gave rise to a multitude of these sad prophecies. Some one had discovered — how, I did not learn — that once in every two

¹ This was written in 1859.

hundred years we had a May without rain, and there was little doubt that we had come upon that fatal May this year ; and every day as the sun rose cloudless and sent forth his heat upon the dried earth, and the dust filled the air and the sky had a brazen look, the prediction gathered strength, and the prophets assurance. But a drenching rain, ere the month was half gone, proved the prediction false and scattered the fears it had originated. And thus has it been with nearly all the like predictions within our memory. Regardless of prophets and prophecies the seasons, with slight variations of temperature, have kept on their steady course bringing in due season both seed-time and harvest. These huge stones, about which we have talked by the way, have disappeared as we approached them.

Others are ever fearful of coming destitution. The loss of a certain portion of their property or a decline in their business awakens their fears, and they are busy in imagining what they shall do, if they lose the whole, or suffer a still farther decline in their business. And now all the mortification and suffering of actual poverty begin to be realized, and how can they endure it ? It is a singular fact, if you ever observed it, that while real destitution has sometimes driven men to madness and suicide, the instances have been exceedingly rare compared with those in which anticipated poverty has led to these results. Years ago I knew a man in affluent circumstances and prosperous business. He had met with some reverses, but none which should have caused him one hour's depression. Yet he permitted these slight reverses to prey upon his spirits, originating groundless fears, making him each day more wretched, till

life became a burden to him too heavy to be borne. One bright spring day, when the whole earth was robed in beauty as it now is, standing with a friend he said, "The world looks sad to me." And then pointing to the bright sun which was shining upon them, he said, "The very sun in the heavens looks gloomy to me." That night his lifeless body was found. He had died the death of the suicide to escape from trials which never had any existence out of his own disordered fancy and never would have had any. If he had gone forward he would have found these huge stones rolled away, as he approached them. And he was but one of a great multitude of whom we have heard or read,—a multitude to which every year is making additions, who have taken their lives to escape just such imagined evils. And a far greater multitude, not driven to suicide, are suffering all peace and happiness to be driven from their breasts by these forebodings. "I shall come to want, I shall come to want, and then what shall I do?"

There are others less concerned for property. They have but little, or if they have it, their hearts are not set upon it. The loss of it would not distress them. But their friends, husband or wife or children, are their idols. And knowing the uncertain tenure by which these are held, they are ever dreading their removal, and in imagination they suffer the sorrows of a hundred bereavements before they know the reality of one.

And thus to one inclined to borrow trouble, disposed to go forth to meet it before it comes, every possession and friendship and relation of life furnishes the occasion of anxiety and fear, and the more numerous the sources of his present enjoyment are the more numerous are his fears for the future.

2. But this disposition has its illustrations in the religious life of many. I see one whose interest is just beginning to be awakened in the great concerns of his soul. The question is clearly presented to him and urged upon his conscience, "Will you consecrate yourself to Christ, become his disciple?" Everything in the Word of God and his own most solemn convictions are uniting to urge him to do it. A voice from heaven, like that which through Moses spoke to the children of Israel at the Red Sea, is saying unto him "Go forward." His whole soul is moved. He is deeply in earnest. But now there begin to appear these great stones, more huge and more immovable than that which closed the door of the Redeemer's sepulchre, and who shall roll them away? How can he bear that it should be known that he is concerned for his salvation, and how could he endure the coldness of some and the contempt of others which he must expect to meet when it becomes known? And then if he should commence a religious life, and running well for a season, fall away, as multitudes of others have done, disgracing himself, wounding religion, and grieving his friends, how sad would that be! He cannot endure the thought of it. And as he looks forward, it seems to him the Christian path is so strait and so difficult he never can hope to walk it successfully. There are duties and self-denials and crosses which he thinks he can never submit to, and despondingly he says, How can I go forward; who shall roll me away the stone?

And when the religious life has commenced and one hopes he has really entered upon the narrow way, often does the same fear torment him. It is one of the adversary's devices to worry those who are aim-

ing to live godly. If some duty is presented and made pressing, and he feels that he ought to do it, there is some massive stone in the way, and he stands trembling with doubt and fear, and asking, Who will roll away the stone? I knew an estimable woman and lovely Christian, rejoicing in a good hope and longing to follow Christ in baptism, and feeling all the time it was duty, and yet there she stood for years. Every time she saw the ordinance of baptism, or saw the communion table spread, she turned sadly away, mourning that it was not her privilege. But her husband withheld his consent. She might attend church, read the Bible, pray, enjoy the society of Christian friends, but to her being baptized and joining the Church he could never, never, consent. At length after years of this waiting, and vainly asking Who shall roll me away the stone, she determined to go forward, and as she approached the duty, behold the stone was rolled away. The opposition of the husband disappeared, or rather changed into cheerful consent, when he saw her kind but settled determination to obey her Redeemer.

And what faithful Christian has not many times found imagined difficulties thus disappearing as he went resolutely forward in the path of duty? A father and head of a family, a Christian, who has never taken up the obvious duty of family worship, or having taken it up has laid it down, feels that he ought to take it up. It troubles him that he does not do it. His conscience is burdened. But then he fears to undertake it. It will appear strange, perhaps be offensive, to his children or to other members of his family. How to introduce it, how to make the beginning, how to get the very great stone rolled away,

he knows not. At length, worn out with the conflict between duty and fear, he feels that he can endure it no longer, and embracing a favorable opportunity and taking the Bible, he introduces the subject, states his convictions and purpose, and behold the stone is rolled away.

Another has felt it his duty to engage in active effort to bring others to Christ. He is impressed with the duty of taking a part in social worship, or of speaking to unconverted friends. But every time the duty is presented insurmountable obstacles start up. He feels that he is not qualified, or that if he should make the effort it would not be well received. But still the conviction of duty follows. [He can neither throw it off nor rest in his excuses. He can find peace only in going forward, and when he does go forward how do the difficulties disappear, — behold the stone is rolled away.

3. Another illustration of this disposition to borrow trouble is seen in the feelings with which many true Christians look forward to death. We read that Christ came to deliver those who all their lifetime are subject to bondage through fear of death. And yet many who we hope are his disciples are still under this bondage, and are secretly at least groaning under it. They cannot rise above their fears in regard to it. Now I have no sympathy with the fearlessness of death which many profess and seem to boast of. It is simply awful. I neither wish it for myself, nor desire to see it in others. It is a great thing, a solemn thing to die, and an intelligent, Christian willingness to die is a great attainment. Thousands trifle with the thought of it, thousands are recklessly fearless in regard to it, simply because

they have never seriously reflected upon what death is, and have no real belief in the Scriptural doctrine of its consequences. But while such an absence of fear is to be deprecated, there is a liberation from this bondage which is earnestly to be coveted, and which it seems to me the true believer should seek. And it is an encouraging fact that multitudes of the prayerful and faithful, who have been burdened with this fear all their lives, have found it entirely disappear when death approached, and have been filled with grateful surprise as they have looked and found the long-dreaded stone rolled away.

II. Having given these illustrations of the workings of this very prevalent disposition to anticipate trouble, to borrow it, to go forth, as it were, on the way to meet it, I pass, as proposed, very briefly to consider its folly and wickedness.

1. It is folly, because in our ignorance of the future, we are anticipating in many instances what never comes, and all our fears are groundless. Now the real trials, in whatever form they come, are, I suppose, the dispensations of a wise Providence, and are therefore neither too many nor too severe. Designed for our good, they come as do our blessings from a Father's hand. But these imagined troubles, existing only in our fears, are designed by no overruling Providence, and are adapted to do us no good. And, as we have said, anticipated troubles seldom come. The heaviest afflictions of life come unforeseen. While, therefore, we are necessarily and mercifully ignorant of the future, unable to know even what shall be on the morrow, is it not the height of folly to be traversing that future by mere conjecture, and filling it with imaginary forms of evil, forms

of evil which we may never meet? Every cloud that appears in the summer sky does not gather into a thunder tempest. Every fresh breeze does not strengthen into a tornado. And not every indication of trouble is followed by the reality. The greater part of the anticipated obstacles disappear ere we reach them. These women, on their way to the sepulchre, had reason to expect the stone was at the door. Two of them had seen it placed there, and there was no cause known to them for supposing it had been removed. And yet when they came near they saw it was rolled away, and all their questioning and anxiety in regard to it were unnecessary. And, traveller on the journey of life, have you not found it thus many times? Had you kept a record of all the ills, from early life, anticipated by you but never realized, would not the number be large? Ah! the fears, apprehensions, anxieties, which many of us have endured, and which proved to be needless, have been more numerous and more weighty than the real troubles which have been laid upon us. And is not this folly? Is it not folly to be thus burdening ourselves, and destroying the happiness of the present by ills which Providence never designed for us, and which are the creation only of our own fears?

But supposing the trouble comes, comes just as we feared, our previous anxiety and apprehension have not in any degree fitted us to endure it. Not in the least. Suppose one has for years been dreading poverty — the loss of his property — and all the evils consequent. And at length by some revolution in the world of business, or by some specific calamity, this long dreaded evil comes upon him. Have his

previous apprehensions fitted him at all to endure it? You would not say it? Or suppose some loved child is suddenly removed by death? It is what you have been nervously apprehensive of for years, almost constantly dreading it, and now it is come. But has all your previous dread fitted you for the event when it came? Not at all. And thus whatever may be the calamity, apprehension never prepares us to meet it. It is as heavy, and we are as poorly prepared for it, to say the least, as though it had never been anticipated or awakened our fear.

But I go further, and I think you will go with me when I say this anticipation of evil actually unfits us for it when it comes. The spiritual energy with which it would otherwise be met has been exhausted by this previous fear, and the soul sinks the more readily under it. This seems to me a reasonable conclusion, and one which observation and experience will confirm.

If, then, this borrowing trouble, going forward to meet it, destroys the happiness of the present, does nothing to prepare us for it when it comes, but actually unfits for it, is it not folly, a folly to be guarded against?

2. But there is a heavier charge than that of folly against the habit. It is wicked. We are taught that there is a Providence, wise and good, embracing the vast and reaching to the minute of all human affairs. That the best Being in the universe, one who never errs, never commits a mistake, has the ordering of all that concerns us. That this Being indeed is our Father, loving us as no father on earth ever loved his children. And with such an assurance, professing to admit it, is it not wicked to be ever

foreboding evil? Will anything come upon us, can anything come upon us, where God reigns, which is not for our good? Will we distrust his goodness or his wisdom? A child beloved of his father, always cared for, whose wants have always been anticipated, is found some day by his father gloomy and sad, even to weeping. His father questions him: "Is there anything you need, my child?" "No." "Are you suffering from any cause?" "No." "Has anything occurred to wound your feelings?" "No." "What, then, — why this grief and tears?" "Oh! I was thinking." "Well, of what were you thinking?" "I was thinking if you should change and become cruel, and cease to care for me, and do me harm instead of good, how I could endure it. And the thought has made me wretched." What would the father think, what would you think, of such a child? Are you the child of God? Do you own Him your Father, and do you think He owns you his child, and has He ever loved and cared for you, and will you dread what He appoints?

But this habit is sinful because it unfits us for present duty. It cripples our freedom and energy, with which we might be useful, and takes away the courage so essential to successful effort. Burdened, anxious, foreboding, always imagining that calamity is just at hand, the soul is fettered, and can have no spirit to go resolutely forward. And anticipated obstacles in the path of duty are ever tending to turn us aside. These three women on the way to the sepulchre, though troubled by the anticipated difficulty, kept on their way, and found it did not exist. But multitudes, seeing in anticipation some huge stone right before them in the path of duty,

and feeling that they cannot roll it away, stop short, and are turned back. How many a projected effort has thus been abandoned, how many a good purpose given up! How much of real usefulness has thus been hindered by groundless fears!

III. But what is the remedy? The evil of this disposition to borrow trouble — its folly and wickedness — we have shown; but where is the remedy? In a world where all is uncertain, where afflictions and trials are frequent, and where no one can tell what shall be on the morrow, how can one help being anxious? The remedy, — that is the question!

It is expressed in one brief scriptural command, Have faith in God. Trust yourself, and all your interests, calmly, confidently in his hands. There is no other resting-place. A good man and a great man, whom God had disciplined by repeated and severe afflictions — trials in his profession, the loss of friends, wife, and children, the loss of his own health — was at length brought to a spiritual state, which he described as perfect repose. It is a beautiful expression, to me exceedingly so. It is just what the Saviour promised. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest, repose of soul, that is the promise.

But, Christian, the time hastens when the last stone that obstructs your path will be rolled away. In that higher life to which death introduces the believer, there are no evils, real or imaginary, present or future. No cloud ever darkens the serene sky of that upper world. And the Christian who has reached the gates of the celestial city has left every sorrow, every burden, every fear, forever behind. And then how exceedingly trifling, as reviewed from

that upper world, will seem the afflictions of the present, — light afflictions, which were but for a moment. How blessed the thought when one whose life has been a rugged one, often leading through deep afflictions, falls asleep in death, that he has gone where not a wave of trouble rolls across the peaceful breast. Oh, could we see it, see it in all its glorious reality, how should we rejoice when a Christian dies. He has crossed the last stream. Heaved the last sigh. Shed the last tear. Felt the last pain. Committed the last sin. Been troubled by the last fear.

There's a delightful clearness now ;
My clouds of doubt are gone ;
Fled is my former darkness too ;
My fears are all withdrawn.

Immortal wonders ! boundless things
In those dear worlds appear ;
Prepare me, Lord, to stretch my wings,
And in those glories share.

THE LIFE IN THE FLESH.¹

The life which I now live in the flesh. — GAL. ii. 20.

INCIDENTAL expressions often reveal the prevailing state of one's mind as clearly as more direct statements. My text is such a sentence. Paul, having occasion to speak of the life he was living, uses these words: "The life which I now live in the flesh." The form of the expression lets us into much that was in the Apostle's mind. We see in it the *habit* of belief in a future life, how ever present the thought of it was to his mind. The life which I *now* live. The sentence suggests that he who wrote it had ever before him a future life, — a life which was to be lived after this was ended. It shows a familiarity with that thought. We do all, I suppose, have some kind of a belief in a future state. On solemn occasions we would assert that belief. If questioned, we would avow it. And yet it may be there are few of us who have so grasped it, and brought it home, and lodged it in our souls, that it has an abiding place there, and shapes all our thoughts and expressions in regard to our lives here. I do not believe there was a shadow of doubt in the mind of the Apostle on this question. To him life and immortality had been brought to

¹ Brookline, January, 1874.

light in the gospel. And more, the expression, so it seems to me, reveals how distinct and independent he regarded himself, the *I myself*, of the body. The flesh, that is, the human body, was not himself, was, indeed, no part of himself. It was only that in which he was now living, in which, for the time, he dwelt, had his home. A man is living in a certain house to-day. For a few years he has been occupying it. But another house is built, or is building, for him, and into that he expects soon to remove. So Paul seems to have regarded his life in the body. That body was no more himself, or a part of himself, than is the house in which a man temporarily resides *himself*, or a part of himself. And this thought, here only suggested, you will remember, is more fully expressed elsewhere. "For we know," he writes to the Corinthians, "that if the earthly tabernacle wherein we dwell were dissolved, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And here the reference is to tent-life, not a permanent, substantial house, but a movable tent, one that, in a moment, can be taken down. And the thought is, that a man's body, wonderfully made as it is, is no more himself, or a part of himself, than is the tent of the wandering Arab himself. He moves about with it from place to place. It serves a useful purpose for a time. But he can go out from it, leave it forever, and still be himself. So of the body. It is the tent of the soul. The thought is a beautiful one, that the body is only the movable dwelling-place of the man, liable at any moment to be taken down. And still one more suggestion. The future body, whatever that is to be, will not be a body of flesh. Now he was living in

the flesh. That was the character of his present dwelling-place. But the very words imply that he looked forward to a life that would not be in the flesh. And this, it will be remembered, he has more distinctly affirmed elsewhere. "There is a natural body," he says, "and there is a spiritual body;" and yet more distinctly, he writes, "but this, I say, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Do you ask, Is not this mysterious? Yes, profoundly mysterious. We cannot explain it. A body, and yet not a body of flesh and blood; not an earthly, but a spiritual body. It is a mystery. But through the darkness that surrounds it we can discern some great facts. We know there is a future life. And that is something, that is much. Death is not the end of us. We know that in that future state the soul will have a body. And we know, moreover, that it will not be like the present body, earthly, corruptible, but spiritual, incorruptible. All this the Apostle believed, and taught, and rejoiced in. There were times, I cannot doubt, when he longed to know more, when he would gladly have drawn aside the curtain and gazed with open vision on that which it concealed. But he rested and rejoiced in that which he did know. It lighted up the future to him, took away the sting of death and the victory of the grave, and even made him impatient to depart. But, having glanced at the suggestions implied in the very structure of my text, I come now to the use which I purpose to make of it. However we may differ from Paul in other respects, we are all like him in this respect, that as he lived a life in the flesh, so are we living lives in the flesh. It is the only life we have yet known. It should, therefore,

be a matter of interest to us to inquire, What are the characteristics of this life in the flesh? This, then, is my theme. Some of the characteristics of life in the flesh.

I. The first thought, though so familiar, is one that we cannot escape as we fix our minds on this life. It is exceeding brief. I know it may seem trite to dwell on this, even for a moment. We all know it. We have heard of it a hundred times. Poets have sung of it, philosophers have moralized on it, and the pulpit has proclaimed it. And why, pray, be ever reminding us of it? Because it is a fact. Because the proper consideration of it is useful. Because we are all prone to forget it. Because God, who knows what we need, does frequently remind us of it, employing the most vivid and impressive imagery to bring it before us. You have all seen the weaver's shuttle darting with lightning rapidity. But my days, says Job, are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. You look on the flower of the field, just bursting into beauty and fragrance, but the mower's scythe has passed over that field, and that flower lies wilted and decaying. So man cometh forth like a flower and is cut down. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth. We have all seen, standing on the high land some summer's morning, the vapor lying on the low land beneath us, concealing every dwelling and tree and shrub, and looking like a thick and permanent mantle. But, turning away for a few minutes, we have looked again, and it was gone, leaving not a trace of its ever having been, so sudden was its departure. But, what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little season, and

then vanisheth away. And thus throughout the Bible, in the Old and in the New Testaments, we are perpetually reminded of the exceeding brevity of our lives in the flesh, and that which Inspiration is so frequently placing before us must be worthy of our consideration. Our life in the flesh is brief, momentary. The antediluvians, who dwelt here for centuries, seem to us to have lived a long period. We think that Adam, or Methuselah, in looking back over centuries, must have felt that there was an immense past to their lives, that the journey had been a long one over which they had travelled. And, compared with the lives now lived, this is true. Threescore years and ten measured but the beginning of their protracted lives. But a life of centuries to one who can take in the endless past and the endless future must seem but a moment ; even to such a life the imagery of the Scriptures might fitly be applied. It would be but a vapor appearing for a little time and then vanishing away ; but a flower of the field which is soon cut down and withereth.

This, then, is the first, striking, impressive feature of a life in the flesh ; it is brief, fleeting, transitory. We enter upon it at birth, we leave it at death, and whether that be in a year, or in ten, or seventy years, it is but a vapor appearing for a little season and then vanishing away. The young cannot believe it. They look upon the men of fifty or sixty years and think it must seem a long, long period since he was a child, or a young man. But there is a vast difference between prospect and retrospect, looking forward and looking backward. But,

II. A life in the flesh is a life of limitations, a narrow, confined life. These bodies are a very curi-

ous and beautiful species of mechanism. They are fearfully and wonderfully made. Every part of them exhibits the wisdom of the great Designer and Framer. The adaptations are countless. The seeing eye, the hearing ear, the flexible hand, the throbbing heart, the expanding and contracting lungs, all that is within and without, is wonderful. A volume could be written on the structure and uses of any one of these bodily organs, and yet the subject would not be exhausted. The body, then, is not to be despised. It is crowded with proofs of the skill and care of the Maker. True, Paul is made, in our version, to call it our *vile* body, but then this is one of the unfortunate translations. He does not call it vile, but the body of our humiliation ; that is, the body in which we have been humiliated by sin. But, after all has been admitted that can be of its beauty and adaptation, it must be granted that the soul's life in it is cramped and limited. The union between the soul and the body is mysterious. We cannot explain it, we cannot comprehend it. But we feel that by this union the capacities and exercises of the soul are restrained. The student can give himself to vigorous thought but a few hours before the exhausted and wearied brain calls for rest, and if the call is not heeded, the penalty comes in a broken constitution, and incapacity for all mental labor. Now this limitation does not belong to the soul, but to the body, the organ through which it acts. We say our minds are weary with thought, or confused by cares, or perplexed by difficulties, when we have reason to believe it is not the mind, but the organs through which it acts, in which the weariness, or confusion, or perplexity is. We, ordinary mortals, stand amazed at the achieve-

ments of some of the royal intellects of the race,—those of a Newton, or a Kepler, or an Agassiz. But these, great as they are when compared with those of ordinary men, are trifling compared with what we may believe they could have achieved but for the limitations of the body. There were bounds which they could not pass. Researches could be pursued only so far. The brain would endure only so much. They had souls that were acute, earnest, aspiring, but then they were in the flesh, and they were constantly reminded of that. Hence, to borrow Paul's own phrase, they saw, but only through a glass darkly. The most that can be done, even by the most gifted minds here, is to feel round, as one would under the stars of night in a strange garden, to gather some knowledge of its trees and shrubs and flowers. This life in the flesh was not designed for the full expansion and development of the soul of the real being of man.

III. I add again, that a life in the flesh is a life of peril. By this I refer not to the calamities and sorrows to which all are exposed, and which may be blessings in disguise, but to the moral and spiritual perils by which we are environed. In my boyhood I was in a ship-building community. The ship-yard was a place of frequent resort by the boys of the village, and the days for launching were gala days for all. We joined in the merriment and shouts as the last block was knocked away and the ship glided gracefully into the sea. But as I grew older, and became more thoughtful, and knew more of the dangers of the sea, I turned away from such a scene, thinking of the perils to which that newly-launched ship was to be exposed, of the storms that were to

beat upon her, of the hidden rocks against which she might strike, or of the waves that might engulf her, with all on board, and there was a sadness that succeeded the merriment and shouts of the occasion. And with some such feelings, deeper but kindred, have I, in later years, looked upon the new-born infant. It is an hour of joy to father and mother, and to all who are interested in it. But to one who has learned from experience and observation what a life in the flesh is, it cannot fail to be an hour of solicitude and apprehension. It is the beginning of a course full of perils. Many thousands have entered on the same course, under circumstances as favorable, and with prospects as fair, who have met with terrible shipwreck and ruin. Let the thoughts go forward for seventy years, and suppose that young life to be continued, through what exposures, perils, liabilities, will it have passed in those years. What passions are to start into being, and grow with its growth, and, unless restrained, become imperious! What temptations are to be met, fierce and strong! What forces of evil are to put forth their strength on that now infant soul! What critical moments there are to be when all of character and of destiny will be suspended on a single decision! Let any one visit one of our crowded prisons and look into the sullen, and sometimes furious countenances of those who are gathered there, and then think that there was a time when the most hardened of them all lay a prattling infant in the arms of his mother, and he cannot fail to feel that there are fearful perils that beset us here; that the sea over which men are sailing is a dangerous sea.

A young mother once sat holding her infant boy

in her arms. He was her first-born. And as she bent over him all the wealth of a mother's love was rained upon him through those eyes. It was an hour of inexpressible joy and affection. But in a moment the thought came to her, "Who, who but God knows what may be the future of my darling boy, what he may grow up to be and to do?" and for a while the thought was overwhelming, almost crushing. Joy was turned into tormenting apprehension. But she believed in God, believed in prayer, believed there was One in heaven whose ears were open to a mother's cry, and she then and there committed that child to God, rolled off her burden of maternal solicitude on Him who had said, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." Does it seem to any one strange that that mother thus felt? Does it seem to any one that her anxieties and fears were unnecessary, that the perils which rose before her were only imaginary? Nay, strange rather is it that any Christian mother can escape such fears. A life in the flesh is a life of peril. No one can deny it. We may shut our eyes to the fact, refuse to recognize it, but it is a fact notwithstanding, and the evidences of it are all around us in the wreck and ruin of characters that were once fair and bright. You wonder, it may be, at the number of fallen and ruined men. You think it unaccountable that so many break through all restraints, and abandon themselves to vice and crime. But could we see all the invisible forces of evil that line all the paths in which men walk, and how much there is within every man that harmonizes with those evil forces; in fine, could we see the actual perils of our pilgrimage, we should, perhaps wonder that so few are utterly ruined, and that so many do escape.

A good man, who had lived long and seen much, said late in life that he felt like kneeling down on the grave of any one who had gone through life with an unstained reputation and offering a prayer of fervent thanksgiving to God, so great was his sense of the peril through which he had passed. And are not the daily occurrences of life, as they are brought to us in the daily journals, giving new emphasis to the declaration that a life in the flesh is one of peril? Do they not bring home to us the inspired admonition, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"? O young men, young women, before whom life is just opening, you who are sending your thoughts along the yet untrodden paths, hoping much, fearing much, it may be, heed the warning that there are perils before you. The things perhaps which you most dread are not the things which are most to be dreaded. Sickness, disappointments, failures of cherished plans, straitened circumstances, these are not to be coveted, and they are not easily borne when they come. But these, in their severest forms, are trifles light as air compared with the evils to which I refer, and to which we are all exposed. Our real perils come from other sources. They are moral and spiritual. They endanger that which is our real selves, and not merely the condition and circumstances of our being. These are the evils to be dreaded, and guarded against, and prayed against.

IV. But another feature of this life in the flesh is this, It is only introductory to what is beyond, and derives its chief importance, not from what it is, but from that to which it leads. Nothing is finished here. It is only a period of beginnings. All is imperfect. Powers begin to unfold, and the process

stops. Plans are formed and entered upon only to be arrested. When the stream of some mighty enterprise begins to flow, and the current widens and increases, all at once the gate is shut. Now if this life were all this would be piteous indeed. Existence would hardly be a blessing. We might then exclaim with truth and emphasis, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* An entrance into life, a few years of mingled pain and pleasure, of hopes and disappointments, of successes and failures, to end in extinction, in endless nonentity, what would that be worth? If we could suppose one to have the choice of entering on such a brief experience of being to be thus terminated, can we believe he would choose it? But there are those who look on this life as all, those who having examined all the arguments for and against a future life believe or profess to believe there is none, that the life we now live in the flesh is the only life we are ever to know, that the extinction produced by death is like that when one snuffs off the flame of a candle. It is gone, — forever gone. The grave that opens to receive the body takes into itself all that remains. I say there are those who profess thus to believe. How life must seem to them, what its value; how death must seem to them, the death of friends or their own approaching death, I do not know, I can hardly conceive. But it seems to me, life to such a man must be a worthless, a meaningless thing, and death a dread. But to the believer in revelation there is no such dark prospect. Faith pierces the intercepting veil, and looks along the vista of an endless future. And in that endless future he sees the meaning and the worth of the present. A life in the flesh, with all its limitations and

perils, has its worth, because it leads to a life out of the flesh, where the barriers are broken down and the perils are removed. He is only passing through the vestibule of being. That may be narrow, dark, crowded, poorly ventilated, filled with discomforts, and if that were all one might well wish he had never crossed its threshold. But if it is only the vestibule, the entrance to the measureless and beautiful temple beyond, he who is passing through it may well meet the annoyances not only patiently but cheerfully. A voyage across the ocean is anything but pleasant to the greater number of travellers. To me it was simply an endurance. The restlessness and weariness and feeling of good-for-nothingness increased with every passing day. I had not life enough to read, and I had no disposition to converse, and I would gladly, had it been possible, have slept away every hour of my time. But I remember two nights before we reached Liverpool as I sat in the saloon, bracing myself against the ceaseless rolling and pitching of the ship, my travelling companion said to me, Have you thought of it, next Sunday we will be in London and hear Spurgeon preach? It was a simple remark, but its influence was magical over me. It roused me from my lethargy. It changed the current of my thoughts. It gave definiteness to my anticipations. It abode with me during the remainder of the voyage, making the last two days the pleasantest, or at least the most tolerable, of the twelve. It was a light coming from the future to irradiate the present. So, in the words of another, "The believer knows he is but a stranger and a pilgrim here; and he comforts himself, as he goes through the wilderness, thinking of the home towards which he is travelling. And he

weaves, tapestries, and paints pictures, and carves various creations. Living, as he does, by faith, and not merely by sight, his imagining, his picture painting, his idealizing, his holy reverie, is filling the great empty heavens with all conceivable beauty." And these are times when some word of revelation, or some sentence from the lips of a Christian friend, like the sentence of my fellow-voyager to me, brings a light from the near future to flood the present, when the soul is lifted above the dull and sodden present and revels in the anticipations of things beyond. The voyage across the ocean is not all to the traveller; if it were there would be but few travellers. It is what lies the other side that attracts and draws him forward. And it is just in proportion as he keeps alive the anticipations of what is to come that he is lifted out of the discomforts of the present. An active, lively imagination is of great service to the traveller. It amazingly comforts and helps him. It brings the future to light up the present. And so faith serves the believer, that faith which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. So the faith of the Apostle served him. His life in the flesh was a hard one, "But," said he, "our light afflictions which are but for a moment are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." But,

V. Once more. This life in the flesh is not only introductory to a future life, it is probationary to it. It is to give shape and color and character to that. And this it is which lifts into supreme importance this life. If the life beyond were independent of this, if there were no consequences that travelled over to meet us beyond, if for the deeds done in the

body there were no accountability and no results, then would life in the flesh be far less momentous than it is. But the two lives, that here and that hereafter, are not independent. We are here building characters, and whatever else we may leave behind us at death, be assured we shall take our characters with us, whatever they may be. There is nothing in death to slough them off. And if we believe the teachings of God's Word we have no reason to expect there will be any radical change there, except that of growth, progress in the direction which we have taken. The scriptural imagery is that of seed-time and harvest. Here we sow the seed. There we reap the harvest. And the word in the spiritual realm is as fixed as in the natural, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." It would be strange, indeed, for one to deny or overlook this law in the natural world. I pass by the field of the farmer in the early spring. He is scattering the seed into the ground. Leaning for a moment on the fence I see he is sowing barley. I say to him, "Friend, I see you are going to raise a crop of barley this year." "No such thing," he says. "I am going to raise wheat. It is wheat I want, and wheat I expect." "But you are sowing barley." "True, but that makes no difference, I am expecting a harvest of wheat." And I turn away saying, "And you'll get it when one of the oldest and most fixed laws of nature is changed or ceases to act." But I see a man living without God in the world. He is neglecting the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. He is trampling under foot his most solemn commands. He is violating every spiritual law of his being. Such is the seed he has been daily sowing for years

and is still sowing. Some day I fall into conversation with him about the future, and I learn that he is confidently expecting to reap a harvest of bliss and purity and glory in the world to come. I remind him that he is not sowing the seed from which such a harvest comes. "Ah!" he says, "that makes no difference. It is the will of our Heavenly Father to make us all holy and happy there. I expect to reap bliss and purity and glory when the harvest day comes." I turn away from him saying, "And you will reap such a harvest when God abrogates that great law of his spiritual kingdom, that 'whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,' a law as immutable as his throne, eternal as his being, and as universal as moral natures are." Depend upon it, my hearer, there is no escaping this law. Whatsoever a man soweth that, and not something else, shall he also reap. God help us all to sow in this brief, fleeting life, the seed whose harvest will be an eternity of peace and purity and joy.

Such, then, are some of the features of our life in the flesh. In itself considered, if it were all, it is hardly to be desired. With the creed of the atheist or the infidel it must be pronounced vanity. But as introductory to something higher and better, as the first brief stage in an endless being, as the primary school from which we may graduate into the grand university of redeemed and purified souls, it is a glorious privilege. And all depends, as we have seen, on the use we make of it. A misused and wasted life in the flesh will be no blessing. It were better for that man if he had never been born. But on the other hand there are glorious possibilities before every one of us here. There is a path in which

you and I may walk, shining brighter and brighter as we advance, and ending in perfect and eternal day. With Paul's faith and Paul's anticipation a life in the flesh was a glorious boon.

And now, friends, if the views presented are correct, then life here is almost fearfully solemn. Dread are the issues suspended on it. Inconceivably great are the possibilities before us. We may rise to glorious heights. We may sink to awful depths. And soon, very soon, the question will be decided.

THE HAPPY MEDIUM.¹

Give me neither poverty nor riches. — PROV. xxx. 8.

It adds interest to any writing to know something of the writer. This curiosity is gratified in regard to many of the sacred writers. We read the Psalms of David with a knowledge of his history, and some of them with a knowledge of the personal experience which called them forth. Of Solomon, who wrote most of this book of Proverbs, we know much; his parentage, his early life, his kingly character, — all these are on record. But who can tell us of the unknown Israelite, Agur, who uttered the petition of my text? Where shall we turn for his history? With the exception of what is contained in this single chapter we have not a word nor an allusion. His father's name was Jakeh. But who Jakeh was, and when or where or how he lived, we know not. We are told that Agur spoke certain words here recorded to Ithiel and Ucal. But who are Ithiel and Ucal? It is a singular fact that of the four persons here named, Agur, his father, and the two whom he addressed, we have not the slightest mention elsewhere. By this single record he rises for a moment on our sight, utters the thought that he has, and then sinks

¹ Fast Day, 1868.

into oblivion. But how imperishable is a single good utterance! Through this brief record there has been secured to him an immortality of influence; through it, he, being dead these many centuries, still speaketh. But little as we know of him that little possesses a deep interest, and gives us a most favorable impression of both his wisdom and piety. It is curious to mark how much of his character, of his inner life, is daguerreotyped and transmitted to us in the few opening sentences of this chapter. We have here what Matthew Henry calls his confession, his creed, and his litany. His confession evinces an almost evangelical acquaintance with his own heart, and the language has been used by many a contrite spirit to express its inwrought conviction, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom nor have the knowledge of the holy." His short, but comprehensive creed is a declaration of his confidence in every word of God, and of the safety of those who trust in Him, and of the guilt and danger of adding to what He has spoken. "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto those that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto his words lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Live when and where he might, the man who had reached this conviction had made a high attainment, and found the soul's refuge and resting-place. A personal God, whose word is true, and who is a shield to all that trust in Him. Here is piety in its essence the world over; here is that living faith that unites the creature to the Creator, and gives to the frail being of a day the firmness and stability of an almighty support. Then follows what Matthew Henry calls his litany, and

what we are all familiar with as Agur's prayer: "Two things have I required of Thee; deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanities and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." It has been said that nothing so reveals a man as the language which his heart utters in prayer; and if this be so then have we here a very full and beautiful revelation of this unknown man Agur. We see not his form, his countenance, his external appearance; but we see what is more, the inmost workings of his soul,—look in, as through a window, on the inner life of one who, centuries ago, passed to his final home.

But to come to the single petition chosen as our text, "Give me neither poverty nor riches."

I. I mark, first, *the beautiful recognition of the providence of God.* The coming to God with such a request is a practical acknowledgment of this. It recognizes his disposing hand. Easy is it to say, God's providence is universal. We read and assent to the words of Jesus that not a dying sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of our Father, and that by Him the very hairs of our heads are numbered. But is it a felt truth? Do men take it home to themselves, and apply it to their own lives and interests, so that their own earthly lot, with all its circumstances and changes, is regarded as fixed by God's providence? Do they in their hearts believe that He raiseth up and casteth down, that He maketh poor and maketh rich? Few, it is feared, ever really pray in regard to these things, or see God's hand in

them. The providence of God is in all the commercial enterprises, the losses and the gains, the successes and failures, unthought of, and practically, however it may be in theory, denied. Busied with second causes, working ever the machinery of seen agencies, we exclude from our thought the great First Cause, the Cause of causes. And it is this practical atheism which is at once a result and proof of the ruin caused by sin. There has been a disruption, a violent rending asunder, of what was once united. Man was made to be a dependent, leaning being, to cling to the Creator, and to see his agency everywhere. Thus, we believe, our unfallen first parents lived. The soul looked out on the new made creation and saw God in everything. The grass of the field and trees of the forest, mountains and valleys, beasts and birds, and insects, the sun of noonday and the stars of midnight, all spoke of a present God. The consciousness of Him was perpetual. And so we know the sinless Jesus looked on nature. God fed the birds, God painted the lilies, and God followed with his eye the fall of the dying sparrow. Nothing was too vast for his control, and nothing too minute for his care. We admit the same in words, but we have no soul to see and feel it. God is not seen. Sin has blinded the soul's perception of Him. His agency is not felt in the heart, nor taken into the practical estimates. Changes, prosperous or adverse, are seldom traced to his disposing power.

My hearers, it is only in extraordinary events and startling occurrences that we are aroused to see and feel a divine interposition, and these rare occasions quickly pass and their effects with them. In our terrific national conflict, when signal deliverances

were wrought, there was a temporary disposition to speak of God, and confess his providence. Men sung his praises with a wild enthusiasm in the exchange, and on the streets, and prayer was offered where its voice was never before heard. It seemed for a time as though the most infidel among us had suddenly been seized with the conviction that there is a God, and that He rules over the affairs of men. But has God withdrawn his hand and his agency, now that crisis has passed? Must we sink into a spirit of atheism as soon as the startling interpositions cease? And so when a family is suddenly overwhelmed by calamity — invaded by disease and death — we say God has visited them, just as though He had never done it before, just as though in long years of health and prosperity they had been independent of God, just as though the food which daily spreads their table, and the bright light of each morning and the welcome shades of each evening were not merciful visitations of a kind providence! Our dull, insensible hearts are thus ever needing to be startled into a recognition of God, or we will not see Him. We live with no abiding impression of Him.

But amidst all the practical atheism and unbelief of the world there have been some who like Agur have felt and acknowledged God's presence and agency. They have trusted in Him, not so as to induce indifference or sluggish inaction, not so as to excuse sloth and shiftlessness, but so as to awaken gratitude for each success and cause submission under each adversity. The doctrine of a wise and universal providence has been a strong pavilion to which they have continually run, rejoicing in the assurance that the darkest personal or public calamity has an unseen side gilded by the light of infinite wisdom and love.

The confidence of Agur was far enough removed from a stolid submission to fate. He believed not in fate, but in providence, between which there is a wide difference. He saw not irresistible Might working a vast machinery; but he saw an infinite and paternal Intelligence sitting above the universe, and giving to its minutest affairs a ceaseless care. Hence he believed in prayer, and employed it. Hence he came to God, and asked what he desired. He prayed that God would grant him that social position which his own judgment taught him was safest and best. And here is the grand distinction between fate and providence. The one shuts out prayer, has no place for it. The other admits, and encourages it. The man who feels, as did Agur, that there is one supreme personal will, one God over all, feels that He can hear and answer prayer, and asks Him, as a child does his parent, for what his heart desires; and the faith that firmly grasps this doctrine of a universal providence has made a great achievement. It trusts for what it cannot see. Amidst personal disasters, and national revolutions, where all is darkness and confusion, it believes that over the apparent disorder there is a presiding will. The Lord reigns.

II. But the petition itself, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," recognizes *the division of society into three classes*, which have always existed in civilized nations at least, and which we believe always will exist. These classes are the rich and the poor, and a class which is neither rich nor poor, or the rich and the poor and the middle class. In all communities raised above the rudest savage life these distinctions have been found. This inequality in hu-

man possession and position has been a fact fruitful of complaint. It has seemed a hard, unjust, almost cruel allotment that such contrasts should exist in human condition; that in the same neighborhood, and sometimes side by side, there should dwell men one of whom is rolling in wealth and the other pining in poverty. This has been the theme for popular declamation and for much earnest writing, and sometimes the occasion of terrific demonstrations. And many have been the theories for reconstructing society and more equally distributing its wealth. And many have been the actual experiments to organize special communities in which equality should be established and perpetuated, earthly paradises where wealth and poverty should be alike unknown. But however ingenious and beautiful the theories, and however sanguine their originators, they have none of them stood the test of experiment. No enterprises have more uniformly ended in disappointment; and past failures indicate that Providence never designed human society for such an equality. No such state of things ever has existed or ever will exist outside of the brain of some wild reformer. Indeed, in everything may we discover a certain delight which nature has in diversity and variety. The earth is a round globe, but its surface is everywhere diversified by lofty mountains and deep valleys and broad plains. Trees have a generic unity, but they differ in size and shape and foliage; and one could scarcely find two spires of grass between which a close scrutiny would not detect some dissimilarity. Each animal of a species, while bearing a general resemblance to the rest, has its individual peculiarities. No two are precisely alike. And thus through all nature, from the high-

est to the lowest. And it is not difficult to see the wisdom of this variety and diversity. Think for one moment of the change if the earth were one dead level, if all trees had the same form and size, if each animal in a species were like every other in the same species! Would this be desirable? On the contrary we admire the prodigality with which nature spreads diversity through all her kingdoms, and, however countless the individuals, seems never at a loss for new varieties. Now ascending from inanimate through animate nature up to man, and finding everywhere this diversity, we should expect to find it in the human race. And thus we do find it. Every man has his own individuality marked by numberless tokens. Physical strength, and personal beauty, and mental endowments, are most unequally distributed, and in accordance with laws that are beyond our research and beyond our control. But we do not think of complaining of these allotments. If a man has twice the intellect of his neighbor across the way, no one thinks that that neighbor has been dealt hardly by, or that any injustice has been done him. If one man has greater height and strength of body than his neighbor, no one thinks his neighbor is thus wronged. And why should not the same diversity be expected in the inferior gifts of providence — for inferior they surely are — such as money, and houses, and lands, and goods? And why, when this is seen, should it be complained of? It is by no means certain that it would be an improvement to have a society in which there were no rich and no poor, any more than it would be to have all bodies of the same height, and all intellects of the same strength. But whatever we may think of it the distinction has ex-

isted in all the past, and we have no reason to think it will ever cease. The more perfect spread and triumph of Christianity will no doubt diminish the poverty of the world, by diminishing the vices from which so much of it springs, and will increase the liberality of the rich to relieve what shall still remain. But the words of Jesus, "The poor ye have always with you," seem like a prophecy that in all future times they will be found. The distinction, recognized by Agur so many centuries ago, has continued ever since, and still exists, and the time is far in the future, if ever, when it will be unknown. The three classes, the rich and the poor and the middle class, are now, as then, here and everywhere to be seen.

III. But the prayer of Agur fixes on *the middle state as the most desirable*: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." He had looked thoughtfully abroad on the three conditions, and had decided that for himself, if it were the divine will, he should choose neither extreme, but what I have called the middle condition, and therefore he came to God with the request that such might be his lot. It is a singular choice. The petition is one that few, I think, have ever heartily made their own, or that few now would be disposed to offer. A poor man might feel indeed that he would be thankful to be lifted from abject poverty, and that he would ask for no more than a competence. But if it were given to us to have the lot out of the three which we chose, by asking, would not most make a different choice from Agur's? Or if all the three conditions were within our reach, and we could lay our hand on the one we preferred, would it be neither poverty nor riches? And yet there are, I think, most weighty reasons for this choice; that

it is one which a wise man, after mature deliberation, might be supposed to make. Let us look at the reasons which justify such a preference.

1. This middle state is most favorable to health. That extreme poverty, with its privations and exactions, is prejudicial to health all must admit. The body has its wants, and if these are not met, it will soon indicate it in impaired vigor and incipient disease. We are a new country, a country of vast resources, and are therefore more favored in this respect than most other lands, and do not often see the full effects of extreme poverty. But in the crowds of mendicants whom the traveller meets in the streets and thoroughfares of some of the older countries are exhibited, in premature old age, in diseased limbs, and in haggard and emaciated countenances, the sad effects of privation and want on the human system. Yet enough may be seen among us to convince us that poverty is not conducive to health. When the pestilence that walketh in darkness and wasteth at noonday passes through the land, it finds the greater number of its victims in the homes of poverty. Overcrowded, ill-ventilated, and scantily provided with the necessaries of life, disease and death easily enter. Nor, on the other hand, is extreme wealth favorable to health. True, one may maintain a life of regularity, and temperance, and activity, with the largest possessions, but the tendency and the temptations are in the opposite direction. I had a rich neighbor once, whose wealth was inherited, and who was dragging out an invalid life. Seeing him one day walking thoughtfully to and fro in front of his estate I joined him. "I was just thinking," said he, "it is a misfortune to be raised by one's possessions above

the necessity of doing anything." I felt that he uttered his own experience, and that of many others in like circumstances. All men are naturally lazy. The old president of the college of which I was a member used to say to us, "Young men, we are all as lazy as we can be. We all need the spur of necessity. I do myself." Our bodies were made for action. These limbs were created for work, and indolence is ruinous to them. It is a merciful compulsion that exacts toil from us. The crowds of the wealthy who are every season seeking health in the places of fashionable resort reveal what are the tendencies of their lives. But in the middle class are found those whose daily toil or business supplies daily wants. Each morning brings with it the necessity for exertion. And this exertion, besides the pecuniary reward, brings an added and richer compensation in bodily health and vigor. It is a beneficent demand of their position that compels them to constant exertion.

2. This middle condition, again, is the most conducive to happiness. It has been a favorite effort with certain writers of romance and of poetry to give their readers most captivating pictures of poverty, making the lowly hut, with its green sward, its scanty furniture, and coarse food, almost an earthly paradise. But there is no such poverty outside of the realm of fiction. The real poverty of life, crowded into dark, filthy cellars, or shivering in miserable attics, is a thing vastly different from these fancy pictures. It is a stern and a bitter thing to be cold, and want fuel; to be hungry, and yet destitute of food; to be partially clad, and not to know how to obtain needed clothing; and, more than all, to be

sick, and yet unable to get the remedies and the delicacies which the case requires; this is a reality which no poetic gilding can make pleasant. That, with certain moral and spiritual attainments, all this may be borne patiently, and, in rare cases, joyfully, is admitted. But this only shows how superior the soul is to the body, and how the spiritual can triumph over the material. It proves that man does not live by bread alone, but may have a life fed from higher than earthly sources, and that is independent of outward circumstances. Through this life martyrs have exulted and sung praises at the stake and on the scaffold. But these exceptional cases, illustrating the power of God's grace, by no means prove that destitution and want are conducive to happiness. They are not. It is not the gaunt and hollow-eyed class of the poverty-stricken who are enjoying life. But if we pass now from the man of poverty and his home to the man of wealth and his mansion, the contrast is wide indeed. The latter may have all that wealth can purchase. His home and its furnishings are all that the most correct taste can suggest. Servants wait on his commands, and he has to consult his wishes only, not his means, in regard to any gratification. Now it might seem at first glance, and does seem to many, that this is, of all conditions, the most favorable to the enjoyment of life, the one in which the sources of pleasure are the most numerous and rich. And yet is it so, as a rule? Has not experience, on the contrary, proved that happiness is most frequently wanting in these very homes? Anxieties often knit the brow by day, and disturb the repose by night, of the man of large fortune. The tastes which wealth can gratify become surfeited,

and are succeeded by ennui. There is nothing of the stimulus of hope in looking into the future. All the resources of affluence are exhausted. Elegant apartments, furniture, pictures, equipage, ornamented grounds charming in anticipation, and fascinating in their novelty, in time lose their power and become insipid. The world has nothing new to give their possessor, and time hangs wearily upon him. So that could we see hearts as God sees them, we should many times see a wretchedness in the palace of wealth, as real and as hard to be borne as that to be found in the hut of poverty. All experience, it is believed, proves that neither extreme is favorable to happiness. But turn now to one who holds the middle position in this New England society of ours. The necessity for life-long exertion and economy is ever upon him. The avails of constant toil or business give him a home, unpretending, plain, but furnished with all substantial comforts of life. Well provided apartments, suitable clothing, a table furnished with no luxuries, but with wholesome food, are there. There is no real want of himself and his family which he has not the means to supply, and beyond the necessary expenses, a wise foresight is laying by each year something for the day of sickness and adversity, or for the feebleness of old age. Whatever he has is enjoyed with a keener relish, because it is the fruit of present toil. The Sabbath light shines more benignly in such a home, because it heralds a day of needed rest. Days of recreation are enjoyed with a peculiar zest because they are necessarily rare; they come only when there is a genuine thirst for them. They are oases, verdant and bright with flowers, scattered along the beaten pathway of life.

Can any one doubt that in such a home, equally removed from stern poverty on the one hand, and from abounding wealth on the other, there is ordinarily the greatest amount of enjoyment? Is it not in precisely such a home that you would look for the most habitual cheerfulness? Are not these the homes, scattered over our New England, that make it blessed?

3. But, again, the home of the middle class is the most favorable for the development and culture of childhood. It is hard to be ushered into this cold world in a home of severe poverty, and to have the first years of life subjected to the discipline of real want. I know that from even such homes have come forth those who have been bright ornaments, sparkling jewels on the breast of society. But these are rare exceptions indeed, single cases out of thousands, revealing, when they do occur, how mighty and all-conquering is inherent energy, how superior to circumstances is true genius. But it is the tendency of severe want to repress whatever lofty aspirations the soul has, and cripple the energies of both mind and body. Sadly do I regret it when I see little children bending their necks to the yoke of severe labor, and passing the hours that should be spent in the school-room or on the play-ground, in the workshop or the factory. It is painful to see, what may any day be seen in our manufacturing towns, little children, in the morning twilight, hurrying along the streets in answer to the factory bell. It is a terrible, an irreparable loss, to have no bright and joyous and sportive childhood on which to look back, to be compelled to bear the burden of life so early that one cannot remember when it began to

press on him. It is a loss which affects the entire man, — body, mind, heart, all suffer from it. Success may crown the after years, and affluence and honors may be reached, but the blessed memories of a sunny childhood can never be his. And experience proves that a home of wealth, and the prospect of an inherited competence, are not often favorable to the development of enterprize and energy in the child. It is not in these homes that the strong men of the coming generation are now being trained. The wealth of to-day, in this country at least, will pass out of the families that possess it by the third generation. It may be predicted as almost certain that the grandchildren or great-grandchildren of the wealthiest families of this generation will be poor. Children reared in homes of affluence, never knowing the pressure of stern necessity, lack the enterprise essential to success in the world. Instead of acquiring, they manage to lose what has been acquired and transmitted to them. If you would, therefore, rather if you could, select in our New England the children of to-day who are to fill the highest positions in the commercial and political and literary classes of a coming generation, you would find by far the greater portion of them in the plain homes of the middle class. It is in these that there is growing that physical energy, that intellectual power, and that business enterprize whose influence is to be commanding when the men of to-day are in their graves. It is precisely in these homes that all the influences most favorable to the growth of these are found. If, then, a man would hold the position most advantageous to his children, and what father would not, let him offer the very prayer of Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches."

4. But let us pass to the last, though not the least, of the considerations recommending this middle state. It is the condition most exempt from moral temptations. This was what bore with the chief weight on the mind of the good Agur, — constituted the argument of his prayer. He would not be rich, lest he should be full and deny God, and say, Who is the Lord? He saw danger in that feeling of lofty independence which is the natural fruit of large possessions, and which he feared might destroy the spirit of dependence even on God, — induce even a practical atheism. There is no absolutely necessary connection between wealth and this disposition. Piety — devout, earnest, self-sacrificing piety — has many times irradiated with its holy light the home of affluence. Nearly all the first followers of Jesus were from the lowly class, the poor in this world's goods; but there was one, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable councillor, and a man of wealth, who claimed the privilege of providing a place in his own new tomb for the body of his Lord. And the Christian merchant of England, Budgett, and our own Cobb, and, more recently, Lawrence, and still more recently, Crozer, and a multitude of others among the dead, and an increasing number among the living, are illustrations that the most humble and earnest piety may be united with great worldly success and large possessions. Yet, on the other hand, the young man of the Gospels, wedded to his wealth, and the solemn declaration of Jesus, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God;" and the fearful picture of the rich man, who had much goods laid up for many years, and the impressive words of Paul to Timothy, "Charge them

that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches ;” and the known tendency of increasing wealth to drink up the affections and absorb the energies, reveal the fact that the temptations to irreligion are peculiarly strong in the case of the wealthy. And it is possible, nay probable, that the light of eternity will show many a man that the disappointments and failures and losses over which he mourned were the merciful orderings of a providence intent on his salvation ; that but for these misfortunes, as he here termed them, he would have lost his soul. It is not improbable that many will bless God in another world that the riches here coveted were denied them. The soul, denied the earthly treasure, sought and found the heavenly treasure. But Agur saw that poverty, too, had its temptations : “ Lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of the Lord in vain.” And here, I repeat, there is no absolute connection between the most abject poverty and fraud and profanity. The poor man is not necessarily vicious. We know that honesty and reverential piety have been maintained and cultivated in homes of severest penury. Yet we can all see that privation and want do greatly increase the temptations to fraud, and often make them a severe test of principle. The poor man, with wife and children, hungry and cold, has a temptation to appropriate to himself what is not his own, such as the more favored never knew, and to think hardly of that providence which has fixed his earthly lot.

We see, then, that Agur was wise in asking to be midway between the two extremes of society. Though no position on earth is free from temptation, yet he who is neither rich nor poor is where they

have the least power. He has not enough of the world to make an idol of his possessions, and to bow down and worship them; he is not so miserably destitute as to be tempted, by present want, to take what is not his own. Pardon a few practical suggestions.

1. Let us be grateful that the condition the most safe and desirable is the one actually reached by the majority in New England. Those who are neither rich nor poor, the mechanics, the traders, the farmers, are the many among us. Especially is this true of our native population. The old world presents a different spectacle — a landed aristocracy, and a numerous, toiling, poverty-stricken peasantry; the lordly mansion surrounded by the huts of laborers who cannot rise above the condition in which they were born. But no such aspect meets us here. It is the glory of our precious New England, with all its drawbacks, its hard soil, its harder climate, and its many faults — the noblest land on which the sun shines — it is its glory that here, as nowhere else, the comforts and culture of a competence are within the reach of the masses. The middle class, — that till the soil, build the houses and ships, run the factories, do the trading, that are the bone and sinew of the nation, — they, constituting the great majority in this and every commonwealth, they are occupying the very position most favorable to health, happiness, domestic culture, moral excellence, and genuine piety.

2. Let the subject suggest to young men the true aim of life. I would not discourage enterprise. Men of commercial genius are as really blessings as men of literary or scientific talents. And if the talent and the opportunities to acquire are given, there is nothing

in Christianity to forbid their being employed. Let them be used, used as providence bestows them. But the single aim to be rich is a low aim. It is ignoble. It is unworthy of you, young man. You were made for something higher and nobler than that. Above all fix it in your mind, that the largest fortune would cost too much, if it cost the sacrifice of the least moral principle. Oh at what a terrible cost are men acquiring wealth in this land to-day. False oaths, frauds on the government, defalcations, practices that trample on all moral obligation, in high places and in low, are resorted to by thousands every day, and for what? For money, in many cases, by men who are already surfeited with their possessions. A recent writer says that dishonesty is the crying sin of England. The government can do nothing, undertake nothing, without being beset by a host of swindlers. As I read the article I felt it was all in an equal, if not greater, degree true of our own country, and never more so than to-day. Get rid of the army of swindlers, and our oppressive taxation might be rapidly diminished. Young man, settle it once for all, immovable, and call God to help you, that the largest fortune is too mean to be purchased by a dishonest act. Say, I can be poor, if God wills, but I cannot cheat; I cannot take a false oath; I cannot misrepresent and deceive. Gold will not pay for that. Enter on the business of life resolved, at whatever cost or sacrifice, to be honest, and if riches come, well; and if they do not come, well. Don't plead the customs of society, the practices of business men, for what God and your conscience condemns. We can't offer these as an excuse at that bar where each will give an account of himself unto God.

3. Again. This subject should induce contentment in the minds of those to whom wealth is denied. It is natural to desire wealth. The disposition to acquire and possess is innate. We love to say my houses, my lands, my goods, and this disposition has its uses. It was wisely implanted. It is pernicious only when it becomes inordinate, overmastering. But here is the peril. It breeds repinings, discontent, and envies. Men think — never was anything more false — that happiness is proportioned to wealth ; and hence, men with a competence go on accumulating as if they could enjoy more by having more. To quit the class in which they are, and rise into that above, is the yearly, daily, hourly effort of millions in this land. And this were well, if this word *above* implied a reality ; if it meant higher intellectually, morally, or even physically. But the truth is, it is only higher fictitiously. The middle classes already have every real enjoyment which the wealthiest can have. The only thing which they have not is the ostentation of the means of enjoyment. More would enable them to multiply equipages, houses, books ; it would not enable them to enjoy them. Strive, then, after the noble lesson learned by Paul ; it is of greater value than millions : “For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.”

4. Finally, one word to the rich. I don't suppose I am addressing any such, for the adjective is a most indefinite one, a variable term, indicating a class which no one would attempt to define. But let me, for a moment, speak to the rich man as though he were, by an allowable illusion, here. Cultivate the feeling of responsibility for the wealth that God has

given you. Look on it as a talent loaned, with which you are intrusted, and ask honestly how He who has put it into your hands would have you employ it. Rejoice in your possessions, not because of the position, elegancies, gratifications which they bring, but because they are a talent with which to do good. Oh, how many are the beneficent uses to which money can be applied! What grand enterprises it is sustaining and carrying forward! How great the luxury when one has the heart and the ability to contribute to these! To you it is given, man of wealth, to lay the poor consumptive on a comfortable bed in a comfortable room; to furnish a home for some poor, friendless orphan; to help educate some son of poverty, on whom God has bestowed gifts and grace, and who longs to be useful; to preach the gospel to the swarthy millions of India, or the darker millions of Africa; to cause the widow's heart to sing for joy; and thus to send out your contributions as ships on a foreign voyage, to return, in due time, freighted with a richer cargo than they bore away, bringing back to your heart and character fruits, compared with which gold is worthless tinsel. As a means to higher ends, wealth is noble, is to be coveted, sought, labored for. As an end, it is beneath any living man's pursuit.

THE SAVIOUR'S LEGACY.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. — JOHN xiv. 27. 5

A RICH man is on his deathbed. He has been devoted through the years of a long life to the accumulation of wealth, and the result is an immense fortune. But the hour is come, and he knows it, when he must leave this fortune. All hope of recovery is gone. His departure is at hand. He cannot take aught of that which he has with him, neither gold, nor silver, nor houses, nor lands, nor stores, nor securities. All these must be left. But by the laws of civilized lands he can dispose of that which he is to leave, say whose it shall be when he is gone. This is the only right now left him in that slowly acquired, and highly prized fortune. Calling his family around him he makes known to them his will, — the legacy which each one is to receive. To this one and that and the other is given whatever the testator wills till the whole is distributed, — to the satisfaction of all, or to the gratification of some and the disappointment of others. The last business of earth is now ended, the will is made, the legacies are assigned, and his hold of earth is loosened. Such scenes are of daily occurrence somewhere. Rich men, men of largest

fortunes, must die, are dying, and must part with the fortunes that have been built up by the toil and enterprise of long years.

But leaving now the present, the dying chamber of the rich men of to-day, let me take you back more than eighteen centuries to an upper chamber in Jerusalem. As we look into it we see there a Master and eleven disciples. There were twelve, but one has just gone forth on the dark and terrible errand of betraying his Master. They have been eating together. But supper is now ended. The Master knows the errand of his false disciple. He knows all that is before Him, and that before the next evening He will have passed through the arrest, the trial, the mockery, the scourging, the crucifixion, the death, and that his body will be sleeping in the tomb. It is an hour of great tenderness. The eleven who are there with Him have constituted his little family during the years of his public life. They have followed Him in his journeys, listened to his discourses, witnessed his miracles, looked up to Him with childlike affection and trust. And now as he announces his departure sorrow fills their hearts. The world will seem lonesome when He has left it. What can they do without Him? In view of this feeling, which the Master distinctly sees, He delivers to them that beautiful consolatory discourse recorded in the closing chapters of John's Gospel. And in this discourse He, like a dying father, announces his will. But what has He to leave? Never did a man live and die in greater poverty. He said of himself: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." The only thing on earth in his possession was the gar-

ments which He wore, and for these cruel soldiers would soon be casting lots at the foot of his cross. Had He then any legacy for his followers? Neither gold, nor silver, nor houses, nor lands were his. And yet He had a legacy to leave this little company, and to leave all those who through their word should believe on his name. He too had a will to make and to utter, and my text is the expression of that will: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." There is an implied reference in the very form of the expression to the custom among men of making their testament or will before they die. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." It is my testament or will, but it is essentially different from that which men make. My theme then, legitimately drawn from the text, is Christ's legacy to his followers.

I. What is this legacy?

1. It is peace. A single word, but one than which there is none more precious. It is singular to mark how frequently the blessings of Christianity are expressed by this comprehensive word. Before our Lord came, centuries before his advent, He was announced as the Prince of Peace. And of the increase of his peace, it was assured, there should be no end. And the heralds of the gospel are seen in prophetic vision as those who on distant mountains are proclaiming peace to men. And when the advent was made, and angels were sent to announce it to the shepherds, they heard a multitude of the heavenly host singing, and this was their song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." He came the Prince of Peace, and lived and died that He might procure peace for his followers.

Hence it was in harmony with the predicted and announced purpose of his mission, that when leaving the world peace should be his legacy to his followers. He gave them that which He came to procure for them.

But what is included in this peace? There are certain kinds of peace which Christ does not give, and which are not to be desired. Peace reigns in the graveyard, but the peace of death. Thousands live and die in this delusive and fatal peace. But there is the peace, too, of a drugged and inactive conscience, such peace as comes from long courses of crime,—courses by which the conscience is seared into insensibility as with a hot iron. Men have been known who have thus brought themselves into a state in which the greatest crimes, the most cruel murders could be committed with no compunction. The long abused and stifled conscience has ceased to speak. The man is let alone. God's Spirit has let him alone. God's truth has let him alone. Conscience has let him alone. He has reached that most fearful of all moral conditions, the very mention of which causes us to shudder,—the peace of utter insensibility. But there are few, it is to be hoped, who ever reach this state. Most are strangers to peace, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. The consciousness of sin does disturb them. They have no true, abiding rest. Their great want therefore is just that which Christ came to procure, and which He left as his one priceless legacy to his followers—Peace.

In this is included first of all, and chief of all, reconciliation with God. The true state of all men by nature is that described by Paul as true of the Colossians,—as alienated and enemies to God by

wicked works. Sin has produced a terrible separation between man and God, and raised a fearful wall between them. The very nature of God is holiness, and holiness is antagonistic to sin. The law therefore, which is an expression of God's holiness, must condemn the sinner. And condemnation works bitterness and wrath in him who is the subject of it. Hence there is conflict, must be till the demands of that law are met. There can be no true peace. But Christ has met the law's utmost demands. When therefore one accepts the work of Christ, appropriates it, relies upon it, reconciliation is effected, and peace follows. There is therefore no longer any condemnation to him who is in Christ Jesus. Justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, my friend, we cannot measure the blessedness of that peace with God which Christ thus gives. We have no language to express it. He only knows its worth and its blessedness who has come into it from a violent and painful experience of a heart unreconciled to God, — to whom God has seemed, and justly, a frowning and terrible God, from whose presence he would gladly, were it possible, hide himself forever. Passing out of this state into conscious peace with God is like passing from the midnight darkness and chains of the deepest dungeon into the light of day and the largest freedom. Peace with God, when it is real, unclouded, is the richest experience possible to a human soul. But this is included in that priceless legacy which Jesus left to his disciples. What are gold and silver, all the material riches of the world, compared with this!

But more is included. A pacified, peaceful conscience. I do not suppose great sins are ever for-

gotten, or ever cease to be regretted in this world, by him who has committed them. There is evidence that Paul never forgot the cruelties and crimes committed by him while he was the persecuting Saul. Nor do we think Peter ever, to his dying day, ceased to remember the falsehoods and oaths by which he had basely denied his Lord. But in both these cases, and in all similar cases, the sins were remembered as forgiven sins, remembered to the glory of the grace that had pardoned, and not to the condemnation of the soul that had committed them. Conscience had been relieved of its terrible burden. Christ had taken it away. The man was at peace with himself. This, then, is the second part of that legacy which Jesus left to his disciples: first, peace with God; second, peace with himself. And if a man has peace with himself and peace with his God, other tribulations amount to little. In this same discourse Jesus assured his disciples that in the world they would have tribulation. And truly they found it so. Hatred and persecution, even to martyrdom, was before them. But He at the same time assured them that in Him they should have peace. Theirs should be a peace that no outward tribulations would destroy or diminish. Peace I leave with you, — that was the legacy.

2. But he adds, *My peace I give unto you.* There was a formal way of pronouncing the blessing of peace on friends, as when one said, *Peace be unto you.* This was not a gift, but the expression of a desire. But when Jesus said, *Peace I leave with you,* He would not be understood to mean only that. Therefore He added, *My peace I give unto you.* And in what sense does He call it *my peace*?

It was, in the first place, a peace which He had

procured, which He had purchased. The price that was necessary — involving all that humiliation, and contempt, and suffering, and death which He endured — that price He had cheerfully paid. The demands of infinite justice He had met. The law He had honored. The way of reconciliation He had opened. What could not be done by any sacrifice, or penance, or obedience on the part of the sinner, He had done. He was about to give his life a ransom. He came to do this, and in a few hours He would do it. A peace therefore which He had thus purchased, purchased at such a cost, was emphatically and entirely his own. In bestowing it, therefore, He was but giving that which was his, that for which He had paid the ransom, and which He had earned the right to bestow. If one were held in bondage on earth, and a large ransom were demanded for his liberation, and one had generously paid that ransom to the full, he could appear before the bondman and say, Liberty is yours. I give it unto you. It is mine to give, for I have paid the price for it. And when Jesus laid down his own life a ransom for sinners He paid the price for our peace. He thus fulfilled the prophecy concerning himself. The chastisement of our peace, that is, the chastisement which procured our peace, was upon Him. In this sense, then, as being the procurer, the purchaser of that peace which He bestows, He might well call it, My peace.

But there is, perhaps, another and richer sense to this phrase. It is his in that it is like to that which He himself possesses. Can we doubt that during his brief and trying mission his breast was the home of peace? True, in the world He suffered. He came to suffer. He was a man of sorrows and

acquainted with grief. He was wounded, bruised, chastised, oppressed, and afflicted. It was predicted that He should be. But can it be doubted that in the midst of all that He came to endure, and did endure, there reigned within an undisturbed peace, the peace of a sinless soul? No doubt ever cast a shadow upon it. No fear ever disturbed it. If for a moment on the cross He felt that his Father had forsaken Him, and cried out under the feeling, it was but for a moment. We may think, therefore, of his sojourn on earth, with all its humiliation and suffering, as one in which He enjoyed undisturbed peace. It was a peace independent of outward circumstances, which neither the rage of men, nor the temptations of Satan, could destroy. When, therefore, he said, My peace I give unto you, this was included, the peace of his own soul. A Christ-like peace.

II. But we have not exhausted the sentence in which Christ conveys his legacy to his disciples. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Then comes a sentence in which the contrast is suggested between his giving and that of men. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. In what is this contrast found? In the manner of giving, and in the gift itself.

1. In the manner of the giving. Men give that which they are to leave, which they must leave, that is, when they give by will. As we have said, no man, however rich, can take aught of his possessions with him when he leaves the world. Naked as he came into it, so he leaves it. He can no longer enjoy the estate which he leaves behind him, or share in the enjoyment of those to whom it is left. But did Jesus thus leave the peace which He gave to his

disciples? Could He not take it with him? Did He not take it with him? He ascended to his Father and to our Father, and entered into his glorious rest. And there, not separated, except by his bodily presence, from his disciples, He enjoys with them the glorious legacy which He has procured for them and given to them. The legacy is still his, while it is theirs. He possesses it to the full, while He freely bestows. It is not, as it is with the riches left by the man of wealth, that which was once his own, but is his no longer. It is still his peace, and will forever be his.

But again. Earthly legacies are usually made by divisions and distributions. They must be so where a number are to be remembered. The father of a numerous family, who would make provision for each, cannot give his entire possessions to any one. He must break them up and distribute them. But not so with the legacy which Christ left. It is as entire for each one as though he were the only disciple on the earth. It is in every instance strictly a personal gift. My peace, not some portion of it, some small division, but my peace I give unto thee. It is yours, if you will accept it, as entire as though no other on all the earth was to share in it.

In these two respects, then, the manner of Christ's giving is in contrast with that of men's. He gives not that which He leaves, but which He takes with Him, and which is to be his eternally; and He gives not by distribution, but by bestowing the whole gift on each recipient.

2. But the gifts themselves are contrasted. He does not give in the manner that men give, nor does He give such legacies as men give.

His is a direct gift to the soul. Affectionate and true parents intend to add to the happiness of their children by their gifts. This is the aim which they have in the distribution of their possessions. But it is at best only the means of happiness that they can bestow. Wealth is coveted and given as the source of comfort and enjoyment. Happiness as a direct gift no parent can bestow. And in bestowing what he thinks the means of it, how often does he bestow what is directly the reverse, the means of discord, and misery, of a life of dissipation and ruin. All experience proves that the hoarded wealth of parents is oftener a curse than a blessing when it descends to the children. Many are now ruined objects of commiseration, who, had they been the children of poor parents, and been left to a struggle for themselves, would have developed into noble men and women. Earthly legacies always have this uncertainty attending them, they may prove blessings or they may prove curses, — may be the source of happiness or they may be the source of untold misery. But Christ's legacy has none of this uncertainty. It is a gift to the soul itself. It is not the means of peace, but peace itself. He enters the soul, all whose avenues are open to Him, and bestows the gift there. "My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you." No, blessed Saviour, the world cannot give in the manner which Thou givest, nor has it such gifts to bestow. The wealth of the rich man, the honors of nobility, the crowns and sceptres of royalty, are mean, mean when brought into comparison with that legacy which Thou hast left to the humblest of thy disciples.

But, again, earthly legacies must soon be parted

with. You leave, man of wealth, your treasures by a carefully executed will to your children. It is a pleasure to you to think they will pass into the hands of those you love. But how long, at the longest, will those hands hold what you have committed to them? Ten, twenty, thirty, perhaps fifty years, and then they must lose their hold on them, as you are now losing yours. It is a short-lived possession which you transmit. The inheritor and the inheritance must soon part. But the legacy which Christ leaves is enduring, is eternal. It is begun to be enjoyed here, but only begun. It is imperfect, often disturbed, and sometimes almost lost here. But it belongs to the soul itself, and will go with it in its departure, and will become perfect and eternal beyond. "At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Death, then, which separates the possessor of a human legacy from his treasure, only takes the possessor of the legacy which Christ gives to the perfect and eternal enjoyment of the gift.

III. And now, friends, the question is, and it is a momentous one, on whom does Christ bestow this legacy? The little company gathered in that upper room, on the night before the crucifixion, were believers in Christ. They were his disciples by faith. And to them He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This was his dying legacy to them. But was it to them only out of the whole human family? Nay, but to all of every land, and every age, who shall believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is faith that brings us into this heirship. Does the legacy seem to you rich, desirable, more precious than the most costly treasures of the world? And

do you ask how you may gain a title to it? I answer, by a true, living faith in Him who bestows it. Oh! fellow-sinner, here is the inheritance you need. Wealth, if possessed, may prove a curse instead of a blessing. Many a one in the world to come will regret nothing more than that here he was rich — that he inherited a fortune. But here is a legacy which is good, and only good. It is spiritual and eternal. It is brought within reach of every one to whom the gospel comes.

The great want of the soul the world over is true peace, inward rest. Men are seeking it, toiling for it, but in ways in which it never was, and never will be found. The devotee of wealth hopes, when he has accumulated his fortune, to sit down in the midst of his possessions and be at peace. But will he? Has one, the most successful of the devotees who have gone before him, has one ever found true peace, soul rest, in accumulated treasures? Others are seeking honor, position, some place which fills their ambition, and on the attainment of which they hope for peace. But is there any foundation for such a hope? Would the highest office in the gift of this great people, if attained by any one of the present aspirants for it, bring peace to his soul? Ask any one of those who have filled the office. Ask them all, were it possible, those who are dead and those who are living, and there would be but one answer, and we all know what that would be. It has passed into a proverb, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." And thus through the whole circle of human pursuits and attainments and possessions; it is in the power of none of them to bring rest to the soul. It can be found in Christ alone.

But, friends, only a little way before us is the hour of our departure. Between this and that hour there may be to some of us ten, twenty, thirty, or more years, but to some of us there may be only a few months, or weeks, or days. But whether nearer or more distant, it is coming. And when it comes we shall want that on which the soul can lean in its mysterious, unseen way. And what shall that be? Anything which this world can give? Has it anything to give suited to that hour? Oh! you know, we all know, it has not. The wealth, the friendships, the honors of the world will not do then. The soul cannot rest on them. But the legacy which Christ gives, that blessed legacy of peace, his own peace, can be taken with us to the sick chamber and the dying pillow—can be taken with us through the dark valley—and be ours eternally beyond.

But, brethren, having tasted this peace, do you wish for more of it, a deeper and more abiding experience of it? Are you singing in the plaintive verse of Cowper, as you look back,—

“ What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still !
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill ? ”

And are you asking, How can I be restored? How come back to the full enjoyment of that legacy? Here is the answer: ¹ “ Be careful for nothing; but

¹ Phil. iv. 6, 7. A favorite text of Dr. Lamson, both in the pulpit and in the closet. One of his most characteristic and widely remembered sermons was upon it, and from this grew one of the most precious of his *Watchman* papers. The sermon opens with these words: “There are some texts of Scripture which seem especially fitted for the closet. They are so rich, so spiritual, speak so directly to the heart, that they require the quiet of private meditation to bring them home to us, and make their meaning our own. One almost shrinks from submitting them to a formal analysis, and making

in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

them the theme of set discourse. The verses just read belong to this class of texts. Carelessly read they may make no impression. But as we dwell upon them, take in the fulness of their meaning, see their perfect adaptedness to all the exigencies of our lives, and realize the privilege they open before us, we are amazed, and are ready to ask, 'Can these be God's words to us?'" The following, written on Sunday, November 26, 1882, is the last entry he made in his diary, and is also singular and significant as the only entry to which he gave a formal caption, and subscribed his name:—

A MEMORANDUM.

Some nights since I awoke very restless and anxious. As I thus lay, these words were borne in on me with great power and comfort: "Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Let me take and cling to these words, as God's own words to me.

WILLIAM LAMSON.



APPENDIX.



APPENDIX.

RECOLLECTIONS.

BY REV. S. F. SMITH, D. D.

My thoughts revert far into the past, when I think of my late revered friend, Dr. Lamson. I recall, with mingled delight and awe, our earliest acquaintance, and, equally, the intercourse of our later years. The thought that he is now a glorified inhabitant of the glorious world, — unseen, but as really existent and conscious as ever, — gives a hallowed tinge to my recollections. As I live over again the days and scenes of our intercourse, I seem to be brought into more vivid contact with that world, and to clasp hands with him again across the limit, as if we were not separated, — I on this, and he on the other side.

I think he first heard me at a Sabbath evening lecture in the First Baptist Church in Salem, in the summer of 1833. I preached on heaven. I have forgotten the sermon and the text. But I remember he spoke of it to me at a later period, and of the impression which the sermon produced on his mind. It was in the glow of my early enthusiasm, and probably he was in that receptive frame as a hearer, which gives force, if not value, to the effort of a preacher. I did not then know him; but the way was prepared for our subsequent friendship. The meditations of that evening were not in vain.

Our first meeting was at Waterville in the winter of 1834. He was then a member of the senior class in the college. I had been called to the pastorship of the First Baptist Church, where I remained during the first eight years of my ministry. Our intercourse, while he was still an undergraduate, and after he became a tutor in the college, was always of the most friendly character. We boarded in the same family, and took our meals at the same table. I believe my influence over him was very great. He told me, late in life, how he copied my methods. He folded the sheets of paper for his sermons just as I used to fold mine. He adopted, in writing, the same abbreviations which he had seen me employ. We were nearly of the same age, but he was never forward in his intercourse, nor rudely familiar. His demeanor was ever modest, respectful, and highly proper. His heart was warm, his piety fervent. He had, at that period, a soul bent on doing good. He entered into all my plans. He understood and anticipated my thoughts. As the hue of the flower often appears in the bursting bud, and long before the full expanding of the petals, so the hue of his Christian and ministerial life showed itself every day. He was remarkable, even then, for his devoutness, his respectful attitude, his cheerfulness, his sensitiveness to humor, his appreciation of everything good and praiseworthy, his admirable self-poise, his keen sense of propriety, his discrimination of things that differ, his loyalty to truth, and his fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

His whole life illustrated these qualities, and was illustrated by them. He entered the ministry without the usual course of theological training; but when he was convinced that his value to the cause of Christ would be enhanced by such training, he did not hesitate to part from his loving flock, to whom he had been an able and efficient leader. He did not shrink from taking up again the work of a student in his lonely room, on an equality with his fellow-students, that he might be a steward fully

furnished for the kingdom of God. His work as a minister in Portsmouth fully justified his judgment in the course he had pursued. With the powers of his ripening manhood called into full exercise, he enjoyed here, perhaps, the grandest period of his useful life. A revival of religion of unusual extent and power here attended his labors, and he was equal, by divine grace, to the exigencies of the occasion. The town was enveloped in the cloud of hallowed influence. Month after month, personal religion was the theme of general conversation. People who were skeptical in regard to revivals of religion were bowed under the divine power. Men of distinguished intellect and high position, perhaps in some instances unwittingly to themselves and blind to the force which moved them, became subjects of the grace of God, and began a new and regenerate life. Dr. Lamson in this period preached with wonderful eloquence, and prayed as powerfully as he preached. He sympathized with all the phases of experience which came under his eye. With consummate wisdom he directed not only his own flock, but often others, also, who differed from him in theories and methods, till he saw them started on a new pathway, and walking in the light and peace of the gospel of the Son of God. This world will never know the full depth and extent of his influence during that remarkable period. Heaven only will reveal it, when the ransomed shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.

He passed afterwards, in the full maturity of his age, to the pastorship of the church in Brookline, where he did some of the best work of his life. How loving he was, and how beloved, as he went in and out among his people. Sabbath after Sabbath he fed them out of the rich storehouse of the divine Word. He had fully learned the demands of the work to which he was called, and he labored as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. He was firm in his own convictions, and yet charitable to those who differed from him. He was wise in his meas-

ures, and Scriptural in his methods, always apt to teach and always ready to learn. At length, smitten by disease, he was compelled to relinquish the employment so dear to him. But after he was too feeble to endure the excitement of the pulpit, he cheered and taught with his pen through the religious journals many whom his voice could never reach. He never ceased from doing good. The sun approached its setting ; but down to the end it gilded with a mild and glorious radiance the far-off mountain tops, and so passed to the joyful morning light and the immortal noonday of other spheres.

Retiring as he was in character and habit, averse to the rushing and tumults, the false gilding and glamour of the world, walking, in some respects, in the shaded valleys of human activity, he still stood prominent among men ; like a pillar on some wide plain, distinguished not so much by its height as by its gracefulness, beautiful not merely for its comely proportions and its brilliant whiteness, but also for the glory of a splendor from beyond, which ever hung like a halo around its summit, but, notwithstanding, to be admired equally for itself and its surroundings, displaying the skill of the divine Architect. And so, full of days and of honors, he departed from among us. We grieve to miss him from the places which were illumined by his presence ; but we are comforted in surveying the work he wrought, and in contemplating the reward to which he has attained. He shone with steady light in our hemisphere during his allotted period, and still shines, with light undimmed, in the firmament of heaven ; just as the Southern Cross is lost to the navigator as he sails into the northern latitudes, but gleams and glows for other eyes in the distant spaces, an everlasting monument to the glory and praise of its Creator

THE GLOUCESTER PASTORATES.

BY DEACON GEORGE GARLAND.

THE memory of Dr. Lamson will ever be dear to me. Our acquaintance, which began when we were both young, soon ripened into a most tender friendship, that nothing was ever permitted to mar for nearly a half century.

It was about the last of December, 1835, that Mr. Lamson accepted an invitation to supply the pulpit of the First Baptist Church at Gloucester, and he spent with us the first three Sabbaths in January, 1836. He was then a tutor in Waterville College, but modest and diffident to an extreme, and his first appearance in the pulpit was not prepossessing. But before he had closed his first sermon his hearers were made to feel that he was a young man of rare promise as a preacher. And their interest so increased from Sabbath to Sabbath, that, at the close of his engagement, the Church extended to him a unanimous call to become its pastor. But regarding his engagement at Waterville, which would not end until the last of August, as sacred, and feeling deeply his need of further preparation for the work of the pastorate, he declined the call; but proposed to return as a supply for three months after finishing his work in the College.

This offer was gladly accepted by the Church. A deep religious interest soon came to pervade both the Church and the congregation, and the new state of things wrought a change in the mind of our modest young preacher. He now felt that here was a sacred charge on which he dare not turn his back. He therefore accepted the call, and was ordained as pastor June 7, 1837. For more than two years he served the Church most faithfully and satisfactorily, and was successful in adding many to its membership.

But feeling still the need of better preparation for his work, he resigned for the purpose of entering the Theolog-

ical Seminary at Newton, where he remained two years. On completing his studies he accepted a call from the Baptist Church at Thomaston, Maine. But after a year's service he returned again to the church of his first love, to serve it seven years more with his former success. And finally, after the close of his public ministry, he came back to spend the evening of his life and to die among the friends of his youth, amid the scenes of his early ministry.

Mr. Lamson was one of the most modest and unassuming young men, during his early ministry, with whom I ever became acquainted. But his presentation of truth was remarkably clear, earnest, and forcible. As a preacher of the gospel his success was eminent.

MR. LAMSON AT THOMASTON.

BY REV. JAMES UPHAM, D. D.

Mr. LAMSON's pastorate at Thomaston being the result of my influence there, it is fitting that I should speak of this passage in his life, so brief, yet so important in the religious history of many of his charge. We had been classmates in college (1831-1835), where he had won my esteem for his piety and his many lovable qualities as well as for his scholarship, which, in the view of his classmates, was superior.

At Newton we were again associated, though in different classes; but closer intimacy as his room-mate only increased my esteem for him. He had been previously settled as pastor in Gloucester, Mass., but without the usual course of theological study. With an extremely sensitive nature, he had suffered much from the fear that his doctrinal statements or biblical exegesis might not bear scholarly criticism. He had, therefore, left the pulpit for the classroom, where, in a somewhat brief period, he acquired the desired preparation for pulpit efforts. He had before this

been orthodox and evangelical in his theology, faithful and earnest as a pastor, and as a writer of sermons clear, direct, simple, and apt in illustrations, — so much more effective than cold logic or formal argument. He was this after his theological course ; and close along this line he developed that well-known individuality which made him one of the most acceptable preachers and successful pastors.

From Newton Mr. Lamson went to the vacant pastorate at Thomaston, the seat of the Maine Theological Institution, then new, but now long extinct. Here his whole influence in the pulpit and outside of it was such that the Church at once entered on a new career of prosperity, and there soon appeared indications of a gracious and extensive revival. One of its fruits was the conversion of a lad just in his teens, whom I had instructed in a class of young men, none of whom could equal him in the details of the Greek grammar. That lad is now the celebrated preacher and author, Rev. George D. Boardman, D. D., of Philadelphia, the only child of the sainted man whose name is honored in both hemispheres as the apostle to the Karens.

Mr. Lamson, though naturally ambitious, chastened his aspirations for fame at the foot of the cross, and in all he wrote, either for the pulpit or the press, aimed almost exclusively at spiritual success. He once remarked to me, some twenty years ago, "I do reproach myself with not going to men personally with the gospel," — his natural timidity came in here, — "but in respect to my preaching I have nothing to reproach myself with. I think I have preached the gospel as faithfully as I knew how." While in Thomaston we endeavored to be helpful to each other, and even in the unbend of our personal intimacy I saw only qualities to be admired and coveted. He was a helpful companion, a true friend, a fond father, one of the most tender and loving of husbands, and above all things a good minister of Jesus Christ.

While we were both in Thomaston his only child, a bright and beautiful boy, was taken dangerously sick. His anxiety was intense. The child recovered, and his sympathy thenceforth, as never before, went out to the stricken of his flock. I visited him in Brookline in an early stage of the late war; there I saw again that boy grown to stalwart manhood; he had just asked permission to go to enlist. Costly as was the sacrifice to give up that son, that only child, the contemplated staff of his old age, the father's consent was given. The dear boy saw only a few months' service in the paymaster's department. The tidings of his death were agonizing. Night after night the stricken father walked his chamber in anguish for which he could find no relief. Turning to the Bible, he explored it from the beginning for some word which might stay the torrent of his sorrow. At length the word was found, and the peace of God was breathed into his soul.¹

In that second anguish I have no doubt he often felt that it would have been better if the first had expended itself over that babe's casket, giving place to the joyous certainty of his boy's development into a celestial manhood under the love and care of the Heavenly Father. As he soon after spoke of the experience of those dreadful days, at a meeting of the First Baptist Church in Salem, that staid old church was stirred as seldom before in its history.

After one year's service at Thomaston Mr. Lamson closed his labors there, and accepted the urgent invitation of his former charge, and returned to Gloucester.

PHILADELPHIA, *April 14, 1883.*

MY DEAR MRS. LAMSON, — I need not tell you that I was greatly shocked when I heard of Dr. Lamson's death. Memory instantly went back to those youthful days when

¹ See the sermon on "He would put strength in me."

I, a lad of some thirteen years, had the inestimable privilege of being an attendant on his ministry in Thomaston, Me. I was too young to take note of his mental gifts, or the homiletic characteristics of his preaching. But I remember distinctly that I understood, as I thought, his sermons, and that they made a deep impression on me. How vividly I recall his benignant features, his gentle manners, his winsome ways! When I parted with him in Thomaston, I thought my heart would break. And no wonder. For he it was who, by the grace of God, led me to the Saviour. Never shall I forget the day when, burdened with the conviction of sin, he gently led me upstairs to my little chamber, and, taking my hand in his, we knelt down by my little trunk, while he with trembling voice prayed God in my behalf. That very day the burden of sin rolled off, and I found peace in believing. He it was who, in the crisis of my life, spoke just the right word, and who afterwards baptized me, and gave me the hand of welcome into the Christian brotherhood. Do you wonder, then, that the name of WILLIAM LAMSON is forever enshrined among my most loving, grateful, reverent memories?

May the God of all comfort uphold and cheer you in your great desolation.

I remain, Madam, yours, with the deepest respect,

GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN.

Mrs. ELIZA G. LAMSON.

THE PORTSMOUTH PASTORATE.

PORTSMOUTH, N. H., *June 4, 1883.*

DEAR MRS. LAMSON, — It was not my privilege to attend the Baptist Church when Rev. Mr. Lamson was invited to the pastorate; but I am informed that he at once took the place in the hearts of the people which he filled much longer than the eleven years of pastoral duty, and

does still fill in the affections of those who remain. He came not as a "candidate," with his best sermon, nor as an applicant for the place, but he preached on that first Sunday one of his ordinary discourses, and the desire to have him for a pastor sprang into life, and took effect immediately. At the church meeting that was called at once, one brother, who was considered far from drawing hasty conclusions, moved, at the opening of the meeting, that an invitation be extended to Mr. Lamson. "Are n't you too hasty, brother?" said a cautious neighbor. "No, indeed! this is our opportunity," was the reply. The event seemed to prove that Divine Providence guided the mover; and two firmer friends than Clapham and Walton Rev. Mr. Lamson never had. This but voiced the sentiment of the entire congregation, and, happily, the call was accepted.

The spontaneous love for the new pastor never ceased, being something like a continuous enthusiasm, which spread beyond the church doors, and reached many who crowded the house to listen to his cogent, eloquent, heart-reaching, earnest, and sympathetic discourses, which, though such as only an able and well-educated mind could prepare, were so simple and plain that every one listened with close attention, and remembered the lesson that they taught. It has been remarked that there was not one of his sermons but what would carry the gospel to the mind of any person who had never before known anything about it; and a friend but recently remarked to me that his sermons were so perfectly arranged that she could now remember the substance of whole discourses that were preached a quarter century ago. We always carried home a new thought, and some new ideas, when he preached; and as he was almost every Sunday in his pulpit, you may be sure that he wrought upon the minds and hearts of his congregation a lasting work, such as few ministers could accomplish. In this was the great success of his labors in Portsmouth. The seed sown has brought

forth much good fruit, and tenderly have many of us cherished our recollections of some of his discourses. Since he left Portsmouth I had a letter from a gentleman in a distant city asking if he could obtain from Dr. Lamson a sermon that he heard him preach while spending a single Sunday in Portsmouth. As it was not an extraordinary effort of Dr. Lamson, the sending for it, a long time afterward, by a person who had probably spent his Sundays in many different places, was highly commendatory of the Portsmouth preacher. I was not surprised, however, for we were all very well assured that it was no ordinary talent that discoursed to us in those days.

Kindred minds naturally affiliate. The best educated and most talented contemporaries of Dr. Lamson in Portsmouth were Rev. Dr. Charles Burroughs (Episcopal), Rev. Dr. Andrew P. Peabody (Unitarian), and Rev. Lyman Whiting (Congregational). Though differing in doctrinal views, these three recognized in each other the genius of intelligence, refinement, and scholarship. They were fast friends; and especially did Drs. Lamson and Peabody cherish the relationship. The schools and the education of the young were subjects of much interest to them, both as members of the High School Committee and as citizens.

With Dr. Lamson the head and heart had equal sway over his words and deeds. We felt that he loved while he taught us, and therefore we listened with love and reverence to his instruction. While his talents and education made the pulpit the most prominent and effectual field of his labors, we yet clung to him as a personal friend and kind counsellor, and could go to him with bosom secrets. He was welcomed to our homes with delight, and we were quite sure that he would leave us better than he found us. Every social gathering found him an honored and delightful participant. His genial warmth shines like the June sun upon our recollection, and his hearty

laugh and pleasant smile give to his memory a large measure of good cheer. He maintained his position *over* us as our pastor and teacher, and *with* us as our beloved friend. So will he be remembered in Portsmouth as long as there is a survivor of his old parish.

About a year before he left Portsmouth the members of the Society assembled at his house to give expression to their regard for him. It was heart to heart, and the remembrance of that evening will shed fragrance over the relationship of pastor and people. Well do we remember the feeling with which he quoted Ruth's reply to Naomi, and the pleasure with which we anticipated his spending the remainder of his life with us. To say that we were unreconciled to his departure is but tamely expressing our sadness when he was finally led to choose another field of labor. We were very slow in becoming resigned to our loss, and while we have had loved and loving pastors since then, there are some of the close friends of Dr. Lamson who still look upon him as the most beloved of all.

For several years previous to his death, Dr. Lamson spent a portion of the summer season in Portsmouth. His physical condition debarred him from preaching, but his mind was clear and active, and his affection for his former flock undiminished. A warm personal friendship was established between him and our present pastor, Rev. Dr. William H. Alden. During his last visit here, in the summer of 1882, he gave a number of informal lecture-room discourses, which thrilled his hearers with their depth of thought and simplicity of expression, showing that while the body was losing some of its strength the soul and spirit were sustained by a wealth of knowledge and experience such as a life devoted to the study of God's Word afforded him. His whole heart and soul were in his profession as a minister of the gospel, and rich was the treasury of mental and spiritual resources which, to the last, honored his drafts. We are glad that

at the last he talked thus with us, for our latest recollections of him are thereby made bright and pleasant, and his last words were a rich legacy of thought and feeling.

Very truly yours,

LEWIS W. BREWSTER.

AT BROOKLINE.

BY DEACON GEORGE BROOKS.

DR. LAMSON preached in Brookline for the first time October 16, 1859. The Church had been without a pastor since the retirement of Rev. N. M. Perkins, a little more than a year before.

Few, if any, in the congregation had ever before heard the stranger who occupied the pulpit on that day. The text of the morning discourse was, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It was a plain, earnest, eloquent presentation of the truth, and made a deep impression upon those who heard it. Shortly afterwards a call to the pastorate was given by the Church and Society, which was accepted; and his services as pastor commenced December 4, 1859. His discourse on the morning of that day was from the words, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in his mercy." Services of public recognition were held shortly afterwards, the sermon being preached by Rev. Baron Stow, D. D., of Boston, who had been a predecessor of Dr. Lamson at Portsmouth.

So commenced a ministry which lasted more than fifteen years, and which ended only when God had laid aside our brother from active service. His own review of his work was: "During this pastorate the Church was harmonious, and the relation between pastor and people affectionate and pleasant. There was no extensive revival, though there were several seasons when the children of

God were quickened and sinners converted." Ninety-six were added to the church by baptism, and by letter ninety-nine. The Church put on record the following estimate of his character and services: "An eloquent and faithful preacher, he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God; an affectionate pastor, he was beloved by his flock; a wise and safe counsellor, his praise was in all the churches." His sermons were uniformly good, full of gospel truth, and delivered with an earnestness and directness which carried conviction to the hearer, that the preacher fully believed the truths which he commended to others. They were perfectly clear and transparent, no involved sentences, no hidden meaning, but every word good strong English, chosen not because it sounded well, but because it expressed just what he wished to say. There was no possibility of mistaking his meaning. No man ever preached more plainly, and yet there was such a tenderness in his manner, and the truth was so evidently spoken in love, that no one was ever offended. And this transparent simplicity which pervaded his preaching was characteristic of the man; there was in him no guile, no attempt to appear other than he was. Dr. Lamson was very good in the prayer-meeting, always earnest and impressive, and when any one lingered after the service to talk with him on personal religion, his whole face would light up with the joy which he felt. In speaking to the children at the Sunday-school concert he was peculiarly happy. At such times the chapel would be crowded, and the whole assembly, old and young, listened with eager attention to the words which came warm from his heart.

It was while he was in Brookline that the great sorrow of his life came to him, the loss of his only son, who was drowned at the burning of the steamer Ruth on the Mississippi River. The blow seemed almost to crush him, but his trust in God enabled him to bear the heavy burden of his sorrow.

Dr. Lamson was a diligent student, and very regular in his habits of study. An early riser, he gave the time before breakfast to what he called picking up the chips, looking over the news of the day, etc. After breakfast he studied regularly till dinner time. I have heard it said that he wrote with great facility, and almost without effort, but I think this ease of diction was the result of his constant and regular study. He kept abreast of the current literature of the day, reading nearly all the new books as they came from the press, and had well digested opinions on most of them. He was universally respected and beloved in the town as a citizen, and his services as a member of the School Committee, and as one of the Trustees of the Public Library, were highly appreciated.

It was during his summer vacation, in 1874, that he had an attack of paralysis, which for the time completely disabled him. He rallied somewhat, however, but soon became conscious that he could not continue his services as pastor. The Church was reluctant to sever the connection, and it was only after several months that his resignation was accepted, and the official tie which had bound pastor and people for so many years was regretfully sundered. His membership in the Church was retained for a few years, and his presence at the public service or at the prayer-meeting was always welcomed with joy.

When the news of his death was received in Brookline there was deep and genuine sorrow in the many hearts to which he had been so greatly endeared. A number of the members of the Church attended his funeral, including the present pastor, Rev. J. B. Brackett, D. D., who took part in the services. The Church devoted the evening of the next weekly prayer-meeting to reminiscences of his ministry, and shortly after, in church meeting, put on record the following minute:—

“It having pleased God to call home to his rest Rev. William Lamson, D. D., who was pastor of this Church from December, 1859, to February, 1875, we deem it fit-

ting to place on record our estimate of the services of our brother, whose last years of active life in the pastorate were devoted to this Church. We bear testimony to his faithfulness as a preacher, and to his consistent walk as a Christian; his earnest and eloquent presentation of the truth in the pulpit was enforced by his consistent example in his daily life. Never shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, he yet preached the truth in love; and by the transparent simplicity and purity of his character, he commanded the confidence of all with whom he came in contact. We bless God that we were permitted for so long a period to enjoy the labors of such a man."

THE EVENING TIME.

BY PROF. J. M. ENGLISH.

DR. LAMSON was well advanced in life when his path met mine, and we for a season walked together. I shall speak of him as I knew him in his later years. From the first day of my acquaintance with him till the day of his death that which most deeply impressed me, perhaps, was what I may term the singular *soundness* of his ripened Christian character; that quality which is suggested by rare specimens of the mellow fruit of autumn. I have been told by those who were with him at the opening of his ministry in Gloucester that, as a young man, he possessed a certain engaging freshness and winning innocence of character which belong only to those who fulfil the Apostle's injunction, not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. Those traits of his youthful character were, in his advanced years when I knew him, but ripened and mellowed into a more perfect spiritual beauty, into a more complete likeness of his adorable Master. He had passed through his long and successful ministry, untainted with the least pride of

success. Nor had he brought out of it the slightest trace of bitterness, of jealousy, of harshness of spirit. He had been thoroughly happy in his own pastorates, and had rejoiced in the prosperity of his contemporaries in the pulpit. He was enthusiastic in his admiration of the young men of the ministry. He fairly gloried in their successes and promise. Often have I heard him speak, even in extravagant terms of praise, as it seemed to me, of some young preacher whom he had happened to hear. He never displayed, I believe he never felt, any superiority over the humblest brother in the ministry of the gospel. He clasped hands with him with all his heart as a co-ambassador to men from the most high God. This thorough healthiness and sweetness of his Christian spirit was an eloquent witness of the power of that gospel he had so successfully preached.

Dr. Lamson was an excellent *hearer* of the preached Word. When I learned that he was to be a regular attendant upon my ministry in Gloucester, I confess that my heart sunk within me. But I am glad to bear witness that my groundless fears were soon and effectually disarmed. No one in the congregation listened more attentively, or with more apparent interest, to the unfolding of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" than did he. Of course, he could not help being a discriminating hearer, but he was always a kindly one. I think it was quite remarkable that he could so easily and so perfectly assimilate himself with the body of the congregation, and became so eager a hearer of the truth. It was a delight and a benediction to see his benignant face in its accustomed place in the pew. His presence, his friendship, his tender Christian love, were an unspeakable encouragement and support to me in my opening ministry.

I have seen Dr. Lamson when he was almost overwhelmed with a *longing to preach* "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." I think that I never knew a minister of Christ who retained to the last so keen a desire to pub-

lish the "good news" as that which possessed him. His heart was ever in the pulpit. How often has he said to me, "Oh, I wish I could preach next Sunday, but I can't. My tongue is tied." As I have watched him under the stress of this burden to publish the message that was borne in upon his mind and heart, Tennyson's lines have seemed to take on fresh significance:—

"I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me."

But it could not. Yet I never saw him querulous under his inability. He accepted God's providence with him as a providence, and was thankful for the long period of service vouchsafed him in his different pastorates when he could utter the thoughts that arose in him.

Dr. Lamson was profoundly respected and tenderly loved by the Church in Gloucester. Their feeling towards him was a splendid tribute to him as a Christian man and minister who had twice served them in the gospel. Not only the Church, but the entire community, were proud of him and of his presence among them as a citizen. He was of invaluable service to us in our prayer meetings, being present whenever his health would permit, and speaking and praying with rare simplicity, beauty, and spiritual power. Every heart was eager and every eye was bright when he arose to speak. The Church fed on his words. The people used to say that it paid to go to prayer meeting just to hear Dr. Lamson speak. He seemed to be perfectly happy among the people of his first pastorate. How preëminently appropriate and beautiful it was, "like apples of gold in pictures of silver," that he should pass his last and declining years among the people to whom was consecrated the dew of his youth in the service of Christ; and that the two men,¹ who, with the flush of youth on their cheeks, had labored with him in his early pastorate, were spared, with Christian hearts still warm and fresh, to take sweet counsel with him, and to bear his mortal body to its place of repose on earth's bosom.

¹ Deacons Garland and Pew.

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